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Falling towards death

John Weightman

MARGUERITE YOURCENAR

Ouvrages romanesques
1243pp. Paris: Gallimard, 220fr.

Marguerite Yourcenar already has her niche in history as the first woman ever to be elected to the Académie Française. This, however, may be the least important fact about her, since history may decide that the Académie itself, in the twentieth century, has been a relatively unimportant institution. Proust, Gide, Sartre and Camus quietly disregarded it, and Simone de Beauvoir, the other dominant female on the Parisian literary scene during the last generation, has probably never considered letting her name go forward, although it is also certain that, had she done so, her general political stance would have told against her. A few of the present *Immortels* seem to have a chance of immortality but, by and large, membership of the Académie is not so much a distinction as a distinguishing feature; it means that the writer concerned is acceptable within a certain range of conventions and is willing to receive the accolade of the believers in these conventions, either through a general sense of solidarity, or for tactical reasons, or— as sometimes seems to happen— with tongue in cheek.

At first sight, at least, Yourcenar is entirely "academic". She writes very careful literary French, studied with archaisms and occasional, and no doubt deliberate, Anglicisms; her tone is grand bourgeois, not to say aristocratic, and her themes are invariably noble and exotically distanced from everyday French life. *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, the historical novel which first brought her fame in 1931, at the relatively advanced age of forty-eight, takes the form of a sublime meditation on the problems of governing the Roman Empire, infused with the most minute classical lore, and, as such, constitutes a kind of apologetic of the traditional French scholastic exercise, although—surprisingly enough—according to the biographical summary included in the Pléiade volume, Yourcenar, in her youth, attended neither school nor university.

The biographical data also reveal that she was quite a safe choice as a first, statutory female, because she has always been outside Parisian literary politics, and in fact hardly ranks as a metropolitan Frenchwoman at all. She was born in Brussels in 1903, of mixed French and Belgian parentage belonging to the gentry class (Yourcenar is a near anagram of her real name: *particuliers*, Marguerite du Crayencour), and her family had ramifications throughout the Low Countries: Her mother having died of puerperal fever a few days after her birth, she was brought up mainly by her father. On the outbreak of war in 1914, they came to England, where they spent a year, and they later led a rather "domestic" existence in the south of France, Italy and Switzerland. M. de Crayencour must have been a curious mixture of playboy and free-thinking, gentleman-scholar, because it was he who gave her a grounding in Latin and Greek and read many of the French classics with her; nor does he seem to have imposed on her any of the conventional restraints of the time. Father and daughter were fairly constant companions until his death in 1923, after which she continued the same life, in undefined circumstances but with apparently adequate financial resources, although her time was split between France, Italy, Greece and other countries.

In 1934, there occurred a major turning-point: she made the acquaintance, in Paris, of the American Grace Fick, from whom she was to become, or less inseparable, during the next forty-five years, and with whom she worked jointly on the English versions of her books. Since Miss Fick's death in 1979, Yourcenar has continued to live in the house they shared on the North-East Harbour. In effect, since 1939, she has been continuously domiciled in America (she presumably missed most of the meetings *sous la Coupole*), although she has made frequent and extensive trips to Europe. This long foreign residence, together with her mixed origins and her wandering early life, may account for the fact that her spoken French has a distinctly Anglicized ring, at least when heard over the radio. But it is also true, of course, that a slight admixture of Anglo-Saxon phonation has long been a characteristic of a certain type of upper-class French, so that this feature would not necessarily seem inappropriate in a member of the Académie Française.

Like her near-contemporary, the poet St-John Perse, she has, then, the peculiarity of being a native French writer who was not born in France, and whose life has been spent mainly outside France. He, however, at least went through the educational system in France to some extent and passed

uncertainty in her literary development. By the time she was nineteen, she had had two volumes of poetry published at her father's expense, and she had written a large part of a long historical novel based on her researches into the story of her family and its connections over the last four centuries. By the age of twenty-one, after a visit to Hadrian's Villa, she had also begun on a work about the Emperor. None of this material was brought to fruition at that stage, either because she cast her net too wide or because her lack of maturity made the difficulties insuperable. However, she has explained that these manuscripts, a proportion of which she destroyed, contained the germs of much of her later writing, and even characters and episodes that she was able to incorporate, almost without modi-

fication, into books composed thirty, forty or fifty years later. If her account is accurate, she is an astonishing case of fidelity to a fundamental purpose and of lack of immediate literary ambition. Perhaps, in her early years, she put living before writing—it may be significant that she makes one of her heroes say: "Les livres ne contiennent pas la vie; ils en contiennent que la cendre." And bad as the sort of temperament that allowed her to wait for her themes to ripen of their own accord. The sentence just quoted comes from *Alexis ou le vain combat*, which achieved a modest success *d'enfance* in 1929 and was, she says, a conscientious writing up of the life-story of a person known to her. Similarly, she presents *Le Coup de grâce* (1939) as "the imaginative retelling of an actual anecdote, not as a personal invention; it is almost as if her literary career did not really get under way until after the Second World War, with the success of *Mémoires d'Hadrien* in 1931. From that point onwards, some of her earlier works were brought out for the first time, either in their original versions or with modifications, and—as I have said—she went on to recast parts of her early family chronicle. It now took the form of two fictional novels, *L'Ouvre au noir*, a historical novel, and *Comme l'eau qui coule*, a group of three novellas, and two volumes of biography entitled *Archives du Nord*.

Because of the complicated circumstances of Yourcenar's career and her habit of rewriting, it is impossible to establish a meaningful chronological sequence for the eight titles included in this Pléiade volume. One cannot put them in a temporal order and, in the light of such an arrangement, comment on the writer's intellectual and artistic development. The only approach is to make a qualitative judgment and to try to

distinguish between major and minor, relative success or relative failure. Her reputation, in my view, will depend essentially on the two big historical novels, *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, an evocation of the Roman Empire in its last great period, and *L'Ouvre au noir*, an account of the religious and intellectual turmoil of Renaissance Europe, seen from the angle of the Low Countries. To these can be added *Un homme obscur*, the longest novella in *Comme l'eau qui coule*, which is another historical reconstruction, set mainly in the Low Countries, probably in the seventeenth century, although no dates are mentioned. Each of the three works has a central character—Hadrian the Emperor, Zénon, an alchemist-intellectual, and Nathanaël, an average, well-meaning working-class man—around whom a whole

exemplified in the novel, *Mort de quel'un* (1911), but I would guess that she has applied to Rönne the *unanimiste* technique of juxtaposing individual destinies to give an impression of collective truth. If so, one can only say that the theory itself is dubious, and its application here psychologically banal. If no influence from Rönne is involved, Yourcenar must have invented the unsatisfactory *unanimiste* approach of her own accord.

In the case of *Alexis ou le vain combat*, the debt to André Gide is abundantly obvious, both in the form of the work, which is that of a unilinear, exquisitely phrased, first-person narrative—a Gidian *roman*—and the subject-matter, the dilemma of a married homosexual who, after considerable heart-searching, decides to leave the wife he "loves" in order to obey the fundamental impulse of his nature. In fact, the book can be seen as an alternative version of Gide's *L'Immoraliste* (1902), set in pre-1914 Poland and Austria instead of in France and the Mediterranean, and with the difference that Gide's hero, Michel, addresses his confession to an old friend after the death of his wife, whereas that of Alexis takes the form of a letter to his still living spouse to explain his departure. He uses the Gidean argument about the distinction to be drawn between love, which is what he feels for his wife, and desire, which he is driven to satisfy elsewhere. The tone is again one of distinguished melancholy, with occasional generalizations in the manner of the French moralists, some of them, it must be admitted, fairly lame—e.g., "le bonheur n'est, peut-être, qu'un malheur mieux supporté". There are none of the sprits of lyrical genius which redeem Gide's imperfect novel, only some agreeable descriptions of pre-1914 East European society, and the homosexual theme is presented in such a muted way as to make no clear impact.

Le Coup de grâce is very similar, but more interesting. Erik, a German aristocrat, has long been the friend (perhaps in the most intimate sense) of Conrad, a Pole, and of his sister, Sophie, whose country mansion is in the Polish wilderness during the fighting after the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Erik goes back there to help in the struggle, and Sophie falls in love with him. Since he cannot respond to her advances, she sleeps around, and finally goes off to join a politically minded Jew, who has crossed over to the Bolshevik side. Eventually, the Russian detachment is captured by Erik's soldiers, and the traitors have to be executed. Sophie demands that Erik himself should carry out the sentence. He complies and blows her brains out with his revolver, thus delivering the coup de grâce after having been the cause of her suicidal despair. This novel is distinguished by some highly evocative descriptions of the war-time scene, and it has a genuine aesthetic, or even tragic, vibration. But again, the theme of homosexuality, which is essential to the plot, is dealt with only obliquely. Erik plays a sort of cat-and-mouse game with Sophie and the obstacle between them is never openly discussed.

This is perhaps an appropriate point at which to ask why male homosexuality is such a recurrent theme in Yourcenar's writings, without ever being dealt with in a fully open and direct manner. She has said that both Alexis and Erik were modelled on people she happened to know in real life. Her other three main heroes, Hadrian, Zénon and Nathanaël, are bisexual, the first two with a dominant pro-male tendency; Hadrian's greatest passion is, in middle life, for the catamite, Antinous, a detail which comes, of course, from the historical record; Zénon prefers boys to girls, thus resembling one of the real-life characters who inspired features of his make-up, Leonardo da Vinci; Nathanaël, while taking the active role with women who offer themselves to him, feels it quite natural, so his creator says, to be the sexual partner of an older man who befriends him. Yourcenar has also devoted two of her very rare critical articles to the homosexual writers, Cavafy and Mishima; I have not managed to find



Marguerite Yourcenar enters the French Academy. With her: André Roussin, Jean d'Ormesson and Jean Mistral.

the second of these, but the study of Cavaly, which I have read, is curiously remote and does not tackle the importance of the homosexual theme in his poetry, although one presumes that it was a reason for her interest in him. Also, throughout her work, there are many references to sex of an orgiastic or more or less deviant kind, but no major instance of a "normal" love affair. This is the one respect in which Yourcenar might be considered an unorthodox Academician, and it is a pity that M. Galey, either through embarrassment or misplaced discretion, does not question her explicitly about it in *Les Yeux Ouverts*, in spite of the programmatic title of that book.

If Yourcenar herself were homosexual - as one might perhaps suppose - one would have expected her at this point in literary history, to have written a lesbian counterpart to Gide's *L'Immoraliste*, instead of producing a superficial echo of that male-centred novel in *Alexis ou le vain combat*. After all, Colette, in whom Yourcenar surprisingly shows no particular interest, had already opened up the subject of lesbianism to some extent, and it seems clear that male and female homosexuality are much too unlike to be used as simple allegorical substitutes for each other. Actually, Yourcenar appears to have left the written evidence about her own experiences deliberately ambiguous, in spite of the fact that she presents one work in the *Pléiade* volume as being frankly autobiographical. This is *Feux*, "produit d'une crise passionnelle", written at the age of thirty-two and consisting of fragments from the author's diary, interspersed with prose-poems in the form of fanciful re-tellings of the stories of famous lovers, Phaedra, Sappho, Achilles, etc. But, despite its confessional appearance, the book is like an extremely decorative screen put up to hide any literal truth, apart from the fact that the experience was unhappy, and led perhaps to thoughts of suicide. One has to look very closely at the text to discover whether the object of the author's passion was a man or a woman; the masculine form of two adjectives is the only indication that it was a man, but when, in a moment of hatred, the author writes that his indifference, his other relationships appear equivocal: "Je te souhaite avec horreur une trahison de Camille, un échec près de Claude, un scandale qui t'éloignerait d'Hippolyte". The first two names can be used for either sex, but Hippolyte is normally masculine. Could it be that Yourcenar, whatever her own dominant propensities, formed an attachment to a homosexual or a bisexual, and thus found herself in the position of Sophie, the heroine of *Le Coup de grâce*, in relation to Erik? However, so, this still does not explain why she wrote up the experience from the male, rather than the female, point of view.

I may appear to be labouring the point unduly; my excuse is that the sexual theme is obviously very important for Yourcenar, but that her inability or unwillingness to put it clearly into perspective from a definite angle helps to account for the relative failure of the early works and for some patchiness in the later ones. It may be that, as a latter-day pagan by temperament and culture, she sees human beings in general as pan-sexual, that is, able or compelled to operate, according to circumstances, anywhere along the scale from masculine to feminine, or from "normality" to "perversity", and that, projecting herself into male heroes, as women writers have (traditionally) done, she makes them all ambiguous (to continue this point, she does not do so with any revelatory success, and so this objective feature of her work remains unsatisfactory).

Her post-war literary activity, which led to the production of her three major histories, novels, was sparked off, she says, by the arrival from Europe in 1945 of a trunk containing old manuscripts, including her early writings about Hadrian. She set to work and *Mémoires* was ready by 1951. As it happens, 1948 also saw the publication of Thornton Wilder's *The Ides of March*, a historical novel in episodic form, which was a best-seller for a time. It is perhaps not too fanciful to suppose that she had read it, or heard about it, and was encouraged to think that she might have some success with a more serious and substantial

treatment of the imperial theme. Her book is certainly a far more ambitious work than Wilder's *Ides* and it is, in fact, a *summa* into which she has packed the whole substance of her life and studies up to that point.

She again uses the Gidian *recl*, but in a greatly expanded form: Hadrian, feeling the approach of death, writes a long valedictory letter to the young Marcus Aurelius, next but one in the line of succession, to explain how he came to power and according to what principles he has governed the Empire. At the same time, he allows himself lengthy meditative or poetic asides on any subject that occurs - the phenomenology of food and drink, sex, landscapes, architecture, etc. Here again, there is a Gidian precedent; as his last fictional work, Gide had written a similar valedictory testament, using the symbolic figure of Thesus as his mouthpiece (*Thésée*, 1946). Since he was by then old and rather enfeebled, his is a relatively slight book, but it may have contributed to some extent to *Mémoires d'Hadrien*.

Mémoires is, then, part historical novel and part general reflection about life. During the first few chapters, suspense is maintained by the question: will Hadrian succeed in getting himself adopted as successor to Trajan? After his accession, the book becomes almost a Utopian dream of omnipotence, reminiscent - but on a different level - of Frederick Rolfe's megalomaniacal fable, *Hadrian the Seventh*. Yourcenar's Hadrian is, on the whole, a man of good will, both realistic and idealistic, Spanish-Roman in the seriousness of his temperament and Greek by culture, who enjoys his tremendous task of holding the myriad peoples of the Empire together in relative peace, and who, in late middle age, can look back with some satisfaction:

J'avais gouverné le monde. . . j'y avais maintenu la paix. Je l'avais géré comme un beau navire appareillé pour un voyage qui durera des siècles; j'avais lutté de mon mieux pour favoriser le sens du divin dans l'homme, sans pourtant y sacrifier l'humain. Mon bonheur m'était un payement.

The meeting with Antinous occurs when he is at the peak of his success, and the episode is, unfortunately, rather sentimental and novelistic. Since Antinous is much like the other handsome youths who flit through the book, and the Emperor can choose any one, it is not obvious why this relationship should mean so much to him, or why, after Antinous's death, he, the arch-humanist, should encourage a religious cult of the boy's memory, while consoling himself with other youths. However, from that point onwards, Hadrian's star wanes and the rest of the story is an elegiac fall towards death. The great humanist has governed the world with some success,

but mortality, in the end, takes its toll of everyone. The book is an impressive achievement, displaying an effortless deployment of historical detail and containing some beautifully realized episodes. One may wonder, of course, if the real Hadrian was not more barbaic and further removed from us than Yourcenar's hero. She makes him sound at times like a blondly dictatorial Secretary General of the United Nations, which is perhaps natural enough, since she has said that she wrote the book in a mood of optimism when the establishment of post-war world order still seemed possible. If *Mémoires* has a serious fault, it lies in the frequent bouts of high-falutin sentimentality, unrelieved by the wit or impishness which usually allowed Gide to give an ironical flavour to his rhetoric. Passages like this sound like Gide made ponderous:

A cette époque, je mettais à affirmer mon bonheur, à le goûter, à le juger aussi, cette attention constante que j'avais toujours donnée aux moindres détails de mes actes; et qu'est la volupté elle-même sinon un moment d'attention passionnée du corps? Tout bonheur est un chef d'oeuvre: la moindre erreur le fausse, la moindre hésitation l'altère, la moindre lourdeur le dépare, la moindre sottise l'obéit.

The lourdeur of this accomplished but slightly laudable prose is also to be found in parts of *L'Oeuvre au noir* which, although written in the third person, follows the same pattern of novel-like incidents interspersed with set-pieces of discussion or reflective interior monologues. The book begins as if it were to have two heroes: Zénon, the seeker after truth who represents the transition from alchemy to science in the turmoil of the Renaissance, and his half-brother, Henri-Maximilien, the man of action who hopes for glory and profit as a mercenary soldier. The opening scene, in which the two brothers set off on their different picaresque careers, is almost operatic in its simplicity. Henri-Maximilien proclaims: "Il s'agit d'être homme", to which Zénon responds: "Il s'agit, pour moi, d'être plus qu'un homme". When they meet up again in middle life a hundred pages later, they compare notes during a long, disillusioned conversation. Henri-Maximilien has lost the bloom of youth, without making his fortune; Zénon's hopes of transcendental knowledge have been replaced by a belief in empirical science and the practice of medicine, and he is in danger of persecution as a heretic. Shortly afterwards, Henri-Maximilien is killed in a skirmish, and the last two-thirds of the book concentrate on Zénon's activities as a doctor in Bruges, until the Church catches up with him and he commits suicide to avoid being burnt at the stake.

This book is less certain in structure than *Mémoires*, but it produces a rather more vivid effect, perhaps

because Yourcenar is dealing not with the remote Ancient World but with the Flemish tradition that was the background to her family history. Zénon is a composite figure, modelled on Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and various other Renaissance intellectuals whom Yourcenar had studied in detail. In his reflective moments, he also barbaic and further removed from us than Yourcenar's hero. She makes him sound at times like a blondly dictatorial Secretary General of the United Nations, which is perhaps natural enough, since she has said that she wrote the book in a mood of optimism when the establishment of post-war world order still seemed possible. If *Mémoires* has a serious fault, it lies in the frequent bouts of high-falutin sentimentality, unrelieved by the wit or impishness which usually allowed Gide to give an ironical flavour to his rhetoric. Passages like this sound like Gide made ponderous:

Plus chimistes qu'il ne l'avait jamais été lui-même, ses boyaux opéraient la transmutation de cadavres de bêtes ou de plantes en matière vivante, séparant sans son aide l'inutile de l'utile. *Ignis inferioris* nature: ces spirales de boue brune savamment lovées, fumant encore des cuissons qu'elles avaient subies dans leur moule, ce pot d'argile plein d'un fluide ammoniacé et nitré était la preuve visible et puante du travail parachevé dans des officines où ouos n'intervenaient pas. Il semblait à Zénon que le dégoût des raffinés et le rire sale des ignares étaient moins dus à ce que ces objets offusquaient nos sens, qu'à notre horreur devant l'inductible et secrète routine du corps.

The title, *L'Oeuvre au noir*, as she explains it, corresponds in fact to Valéry's analytical enterprise, which is comparable to the *opus ingenuum* of the alchemist: the breaking down of the given into its elements in the hope of an eventual, and more precious, synthesis. In the novel, the synthesis is never achieved; empirical, scientific knowledge gives great power, which Zénon develops as best he can, but it does not, in the last resort, give power over its own power, or over the wilfulness of mankind, and Zénon foresees the possibility of atomic energy and the dislocation of the planet. If, risking a broad generalization, we read *Mémoires d'Hadrien* and *L'Oeuvre au noir* as historical allegories, we might say that the first corresponds, by and large, to Gidean humanism: human life is ultimately tragic, but if men of good will organize the world to the best of their ability and in accordance with the multiple needs of human nature, a degree of happiness and serenity can be achieved. The second is nearer to Valéry's nihilistic humanism: in spite of moments of intense poetic delight and the perpetually renewed excitement of the thirst for knowledge, life is, at bottom, so inextricable a jumble, an endless political-cum-religious tragedy, over

which we have no real control - in short, "un défaut dans la pureté du Non-Être".

This latter impression is conveyed by a very powerful and colourful chaos of the religious and political chaos of Renaissance Europe, especially as it was reflected in Bruges. In addition to her mastery of intellectual debate, Yourcenar has considerable gifts as an instinctive novelist, capable of rendering the irrational details of everyday life with a sort of Flemish carthiness and solidity. The highlights of the book are not only the sophisticated discussions about belief and non-belief between Zénon and a genuinely religious-minded priest, but also certain purely non-religious episodes such as a description of the siege of Münster or the story of how Zénon tries in vain to escape from Bruges.

In the third historical novel, *Un homme obscur*, the instinctive novelist seems to take over altogether, and philosophical reflection is almost completely eliminated. It is as if Yourcenar, after presenting two different types of "great" individuals, the man of action and the thinker, had decided to try her hand at another human type, the average decent man, to whom it never occurs to try to be the master of his fate, but who reacts with modest courage to the absurd torments of events. Here again, there are obvious literary references. The hero is called Nathanaël, a name made famous by Gide through its frequent use as a vocative in *La Nourriture Terrestre*; Yourcenar may have chosen it ironically, because Gide's narrator frequently calls upon his Nathanaël to become the solid architect of his own personal happiness. But, since *Un homme obscur* was mainly written in the 1970s, he had no doubt also had time to read Camus; at least, one cannot help seeing parallels with *La Mort heureuse* and *L'Étranger*, and even *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* and Camus's early essays. Like Mersault of *L'Étranger*, Nathanaël is tubercular, and his slow death on the shore of one of the Frisian Islands offers a remarkable similarity with Mersault's corresponding demise on the Mediterranean coast near Algiers. He has the rather dumb well-meaning and essential innocence of Mersault of *L'Étranger*, and also Camus's general feeling for the truth and beauty of landscape, as well as his vague nostalgia to "relaxer la conscience et devenir un peu pierre parmi les pierres".

Nevertheless, Nathanaël is firmly set in Yourcenar's own cultural context: he begins life in Greco-Roman England, as a member of the Dutch ship-building colony there; he ruins away to sea and has various experiences on the east coast of America; he comes back to settle in Amsterdam, first as a journeyman-printer involved with a Jewish prostitute, then as a writer in the house of a rich merchant, for whose widowed daughter he conceives a tender attachment. As his tuberculosis worsens, the family send him to their summer cabin in the Frisian Islands, where he dies alone in mute contemplation of the indifferent cosmic forces of the sky and the sea. Yourcenar doesn't manage, and perhaps doesn't try to make his story as archetypal as those of Mersault and Mersault: Camus had invented the "outsider" once and for all; but she does succeed admirably in adapting a Camus-like absurdist humanism to the picaresque career of a minor Northern hero, and in expressing the need to articulate to beautifully articulated French, from which secretiveness has been finally exorcised.

After rejecting the idea of a chronological development to Yourcenar's work, I now realize that I have, in fact, indicated something approaching such a development, corresponding to the successive publication of the three major post-war novels, whatever the fragments they may contain. I read them as a triptych, expressing significant variations on a basic twentieth-century humanism: first, relatively confident, then more anguished, and finally absurdist and quietist. That this humanism has been nourished by an exceptionally close reading of Gide, Valéry, Camus and various other French writers of the near or more remote past, there can, I think, be little doubt. But, in these three works, of best maturity, Yourcenar has her own voice with its original and unusual Low Countries timbre.

Peter Porter

Mirror on mirror mirrored is all the show

Linda Taylor

CLIVE JAMES
Brilliant Creatures
317pp. Cape. £7.95.
0 224 01212 2

Clive James has entered the ring again in his padded leather writer's mittens and this time he's socking it to us with a novel. Well . . . it's almost a novel - James's initial defensive tactic is to qualify (in his introduction) the nature of the book he has written: "[it] will have to be called a novel, even though it is patently not a novel in the accepted sense." Novels in the accepted sense, he calls "proper" novels - they're the ones that everyone else is writing and he has "nothing but respect" for their "detached limpidity". Round one to James.

Apparently, with its "autonomous naturalism", and its ability to "pass the test of credibility . . . the novel proper is in the main line of human achievement" (it looks like he's sparring with Leavis) while "the novel imposter is, at best, what used to be called a sport", though it does have "its

own interesting heritage from Sterne down through Peacock to Flaubert and beyond." Round two to James - he's given himself a respectable heritage without having to live up to any preconceived notions of form or style.

By such disclaimers, James has entitled himself to do what he most likes doing: play. And this particular writing game, it seems, is going to be more solipsistic, more self-indulgent, than anything he has written before. In some sense, he says, all the characters are parts of his mind. (Though I'm hesitant to take on the burly kid from Kogarah, isn't that in the nature of character, anyway, whether you're writing proper or imposter novels?) James, in fact, ensures that he writes a properly improper novel by taking on board some eighteenth-century luggage - the ingenious introduction and a long final section of spoof academic notes - and, for good measure, he's added a comprehensive index of references and cross references. Within the narrative, the scheme of the book, with its assembly of odd characters, its diverting dialogue and its absurd incidents, is loosely Peacockian.

When, however, James stops hiding

his traces with jokes about the price of taxis, the inefficiency of British Rail or the exotic passengers on the Underground there is a more serious point being made. It's a point about mirror images: "when you look at others you see yourself reflected, and when you look at yourself you are nowhere to be found."

Where Peregrine Pryke was a caricature among caricatures, Lancelot Windhover, the central character in *Brilliant Creatures*, exists only in the way that everyone else exists - as reflections of one another. What James shows, beneath all the glitter and fun, is the way in which we invent the people that we meet in order to make them conform to certain patterns that we inhabit, and, in turn, how we adapt ourselves to the ideas that others have of us. The London literary scene, once again the butt of James's satire, is a brittle ego machine in which individuality is sacrificed to the moister, gossip. It is also an incestuous cloning device whereby the publishers, writers, journalists and hostesses, who know each other through various permutations of parties, lunches and dinners (and who get to know each other better through more private liaisons in and out of bed), have

interchangeable characteristics, lead interchangeable lives.

To enhance the mirroring effect, James employs a kind of novelistic eclecticism through the repetition of language and events. Early on, for instance, Lancelot imagines "the stubbed corpse of some forgotten young actor [floating] outside in the swimming pool" of a Los Angeles hotel. Later, at one of Victor Ludlow's flashy publisher's parties, there is, indeed, a "celebrated actor . . . floating fully dressed, face upwards in the swimming pool." And, later still, at a Los Angeles party in a pool in the middle of the house, another "celebrated actor floated . . . fully dressed and face up." What does it mean? In another kind of novel (the surrealist kind?) such an event would be loaded with symbolic significance. Here, though, it is simply an example of reflection. Because it is the kind of thing that might conceivably happen, it can, therefore, happen over and over again, like the taxi driver's conversation with Lancelot about turning railway lines into coach roads, which reiterates a literary luncheon conversation at Foscori's. Similarly, characters repeat each other's words verbatim, and the beginnings of paragraphs or chapters often echo the endings of previous paragraphs or chapters.

Literary London is peopled by interlocking couples. Not only do they reflect each others' thoughts and actions, they also have the habit of changing partners with the speed and expertise of a square dance formation. Lancelot, who is simply an example of the academic Charlotte ("for an automatic entrée to the less interesting, but, he had presumed, more deeply satisfying world which lay beyond and above the Bohemia he had already conquered"), is in love with Samantha who, regardless of her double first, writes feature articles for the glossy magazines. Charlotte, therefore, feels at liberty to fall for the radical writer, David, who has to get rid of his girlfriend, Gaga. And so on. In a sense

its coorte." Lacking the means to write his story down, he must ceaselessly repeat it to himself, terrified lest he lose his gist and, in relinquishing control over events, literally lose the world.

In *Fictional Lives*, Fleetwood's previous collection of stories, Joseph Brandon mataitoe that good writers are nothing more than "historians of the present". A *Dance to the Glory of God* exceeds this brief to the extent that, having specified the disasters of everyday life, it seeks to impose a system of meaning upon them. It is tendentious and exegetical. Its circumlocutions are self-indulgent. For all their fluency and good sense, these stories, generally fat, the edge and precision that a more consistently ironic perspective might have lent them.

Grounded by anxiety

John Melmoth

HUGH FLEETWOOD
A Dance to the Glory of God
183pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.
0 241 11088 2

"The Dance", the first and most conspicuously structured of the six stories in Hugh Fleetwood's *A Dance to the Glory of God*, encloses a split, a disjunction or ambivalence which is characteristic of the collection as a whole. There is the robust comedy with which Woody from *Auntie Coo* is depicted. She is the kind of aunt who won't offer you a drink now because there's bound to be more than enough later and for whom even listening to Mozart is sinful - we have no "right" to anything so beautiful. Her freezing glance might have set Bertram Wooster shaking like an aspen. There are also the lugubrious Bildungsroman (a portrait of the artist as depressive), the report on the condition of England (a national decline into shabbiness) and the listless drilling of squads of tired antiheroes: acting and being, dream and reality, existence and essence. Stuart Carter, the ex-act actor who is responsible for much of the extra-narrative speculation, simultaneously professes a reluctance to formulate his feelings and expresses them at some length. An expert comedy of manners is frustratingly disrupted by metaphysical discursions which lead towards incoherence.

Fleetwood's last book, the novel *A Young Fair God*, which exposed the lurid imaginings of an obnoxious schoolboy *ubermensch*, was as theatrical in manner as in subject: dark gods, ritual murder and unquiet loins. These new stories are more sedate. They provide an intimate account of the ounces of evasion and compromise, the strategies adopted by the protagonists simply in order to get through the day. The normal condition of Stuart, Anthony ("The Inventor") and Hugh ("Robert") is that of alienation and panic. Clinging tenaciously to the margins of existence, they are alone in space, abandoned, derelict, condemned to freedom, ontologically insecure, cosmically embarrassed. Their anxieties preoccupy them practically to the exclusion of all else.

One character quotes Chekhov: "Let the cranes philosophise as how; as they like as long as they keep on flying." Far from taking flight, these lame ducks are unable even to feel secure on the ground which is rent with fissures, liable to heave and crack. The metaphors that they employ to convey their unease emphasize their dizziness: they fear slipping through the ice, slipping off the cliff, falling off the edge of the world.

T. J. Binyon

JOHN GARDNER

Icebreaker
250pp. Cape. £7.50.
0 224 02949 5

This is the third James Bond adventure written by John Gardner following in the footsteps of Ian Fleming. Bond, in unholy alliance with the CIA, the KGB and the Israeli secret service, travels to Finland to meet a beautiful girl or two and, en passant, to destroy a neo-Nazi terrorist group that, under the deeply sinister leadership of Count Conrad von Glöck, aims at world domination: anything less would be something of an anticlimax.

We can't take with any seriousness these attempts to prolong artificially the life of a popular hero if we're not convinced by the limitation of the original, of course, the more difficult it is to hit this latter off. At one extreme no one has come anywhere near producing an even half good imitation of Sherlock Holmes. At the other, Sexton Blake has been soldiering on since 1893, unperturbed by the stylistic vagaries of the two hundred contributed scribbles who have contributed towards his existence. And Gerard Fairlie followed Sapper, without the goose that lays the golden eggs and flogging a dead horse: but isn't it time to let Bond retire to that leather armchair in the club, where he can, favouring his gout - put one leg up on a footstool and, occasionally, on a summer afternoon made more drowsy by an extra glass of port after lunch, with a young friend down from Eton for the day, exhibit his unique collection of international lovebirds?

The Architecture of Cognition

by JOHN R ANDERSON

A major event in cognitive science, *The Architecture of Cognition* presents the latest version of Anderson's well-known cognitive theory (ACT) and argues tellingly that the system provides a basic framework for a unified theory of the human mind.

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HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

126 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SD

The denominational vote

James Cornford

KENNETH D. WALD

Crosses on the Ballot: Patterns of British Voter Alignment Since 1885
263pp. Princeton University Press.
£21.60.
0 691 05365 0

Voter alignment in Britain is a hot topic. Was Labour's showing in the recent election due to tactical folly or structural failure? Would things have looked very different under another leader? Or was it the result of the shrinkage of Labour's traditional base in the mines, the docks, the railways, the steel works and so forth? Or does the increasing volatility of the electorate preclude the replacement of Labour by an alternative with a different social base, but an entirely new sort of relationship between the voters and all the parties? If we are puzzled about what is happening now it is not surprising: we are still puzzled about what happened in the last great realignment when Labour replaced the Liberals. It is on this realignment that Kenneth D. Wald's interesting and infuriating book attempts to throw light, by an analysis of the general elections between 1885 and 1910.

The Third Reform Act of 1885 is the obvious place to start. It extended the vote to the majority of adult males, abolishing an arbitrary distinction between borough and county constituencies, many of which were industrial, urban or suburban. For the first time a large majority of constituencies returned a single member and the cities were divided in the way familiar to us now. Along with the Corrupt Practices Act of 1883, the increase in the electorate confined direct bribery to a handful of small towns, and something like a national campaign was waged across the country. The first general election conducted under its terms resulted in a triumph for the Gladstonian coalition, which promptly fell apart, weakened immediately by a dramatic secession to the right over Home Rule and more

gradually by a growing demand for independent labour representation on the left.

Seven further general elections were fought before the First World War in the same constituencies with the same franchise. Together they provide a convenient set for analysing the fortunes of the political parties and the behaviour of the electorate. The prevailing orthodoxy, crudely put, holds that this period saw the emergence of two characteristic features of twentieth-century electoral behaviour: the first, a common national movement of opinion at elections with little regional or constituency variation; and the second, class, variously and often vaguely defined, as the strongest influence on the individual voter's choice of party. It is with the second of these propositions that Dr Wald takes issue. He harks back to an earlier view that the underlying dimension which best explains voters' allegiances up to the First World War is not class but denomination: Anglican Tories, nonconformist Liberals. The significance of this proposition is to delay the emergence of class as the salient determinant of voting until after the further extension of the franchise in 1918 and to throw doubt on the view that the Liberals already had the working-class vote before 1914 and were it away by tactical ineptitude and divisions in the leadership. The interest of Wald's book lies not so much in his thesis, which is both familiar and plausible, but in the way he sets out to establish it.

The problems facing the electoral analyst in this period are formidable. It is not a straightforward matter to compare one election with another: variations in turnout, in the number of seats contested and in the party affiliations of candidates all create problems. These are nothing beside the problems in finding satisfactory measures, whether for class or denomination, to correlate with the voting statistics. The administrative system might have been expressly designed to frustrate the electoral geographer. The boundaries of registration districts and local authorities

often seldom coincide with those of constituencies. The census data were collected with other purposes in mind and are difficult to interpret, let alone manipulate. Information on church membership and attendance is sparse. For these reasons historians of the period have either eschewed statistical analysis or undertaken it in a limited way using imperfect surrogate measures for the social composition of constituencies.

Wald is rightly critical of these efforts and himself attempts something altogether more systematic and ambitious. He brings to this task a clear head, technical sophistication and a boldness bordering on effrontery. But despite sympathy and admiration for his thoroughness and ingenuity, I do not think he gets us any nearer to sorting out the complex interactions involved in social change and the success and failure of political parties in adapting to it. The reasons for this are twofold. The first concerns the limitations of the data and Wald's methods of overcoming them. His first method is to acknowledge the limitations but to go ahead anyway. His second method is to solve the lack of fit between census districts and constituencies, by aggregating constituencies into surrogate voting units. The virtue of ecological correlations as a technique depends on the relation between individual behaviour and the context in which it takes place. While one may have misgivings about the value of the measures which Wald has derived from the census and still more doubt about his denominational measures, one thing we can be certain about is that electors vote in a particular constituency for particular candidates. Wald's method sacrifices this genuine political context and further decreases the weight to be given to his findings as against other kinds of evidence.

None of this would matter if he were tentative in his conclusions, but he is not. Having established that his surrogate measures of nonconformist strength are the best predictor of non-uniform voting in his surrogate electoral units, Wald goes on to construct an exaggerated picture of the

denominational basis of the Victorian parties and to elaborate an entirely fanciful model of the effects of the establishment of non-sectarian schooling after 1870 on the future prospects of the Liberal Party. To acknowledge that nonconformists were strong Liberals and in many places provided the cutting edge of mid-Victorian radicalism is not to say that the Liberal Party was a nonconformist party. It was as much a denominational coalition as a class one and embraced evangelicals, broad churchmen, Erastian Whigs, agnostics, anti-clericals and popular atheists as well as a variety of nonconformists.

The waning of militant dissent undoubtedly had an effect on the vigour of the Liberal Party. What I do not accept is that a subterranean process of socialization among successive generations of board school pupils undermined the confessional basis of Liberalism. Nor was class a residual factor emerging only with the receding tide of religious feeling. Through the 1880s and 1890s politicians at all points of the political compass became increasingly aware of the urgency of social reform for many of their constituents. Class became important because people made it so. In some parts of the country the Liberals came to terms with the claims of organized labour for parliamentary representation and adopted an economic and social programme which appealed to and won working-class support. The question is why this adaptation did not occur across the country as a whole, why some Liberals refused to concede the claims of labour, or some sections of organized

labour refused to accept the terms of the bargain. Why in fact the Labour Party was there at all to profit from the divisions of the Liberals and the further extension of the franchise in 1918.

The answer is not going to emerge from the analysis of aggregate national data, because, contrary to the received wisdom, Britain was not (and is not) a homogeneous country. Even within a single industry conditions varied critically; whereas a Lib-Lab pact could be put together in the East Midlands coalfield no such thing proved possible in South Wales. Nor is it simply a question of the failure of leadership: there were certainly failures of nerve and imagination at the top. But the difficulties of the leadership reflected divisions at the local level and the differences in the circumstances confronting local leadership. The only way to get at these is through the painstaking reconstruction of local and regional political history in the manner of Pelling, Thompson, Clarke and Waller. Parties may outlive the nexus of interests on which they were established and suffer dramatic electoral eclipse. The electoral shock may be delayed. But the process is inevitable. It can be traced through internal party rows, contested nominations, local defections, the appearance of independent candidates and so forth. The fate of the party by 1939 the film of Mitchell's novel, *Gone with the Wind*, had its world premiere in Atlanta, Georgia; a statewide holiday was proclaimed by the governor, and film celebrities arriving for the event were watched by crowds "larger than the combined armies that fought the battle of Atlanta". Confederate flags waved; the band played "Dixie", and for the entire state of Georgia it was, writes Ma Edwards, "the winning the Battle of Atlanta twenty-five years later". Those whom history will not vindicate can look to the movies.

Hassle on the hustings

Craig Brown

CAROL THATCHER

Diary of an Election: With Margaret Thatcher on the Campaign Trail
162pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £6.95 (paperback, £3.95).
0 283 99068 6

Two of the most popular essay titles set by third teachers to young children are "What I Did On My Holidays" and "A Day in the Life of a Penny". The completed essays tend to be episodic, over-excited and ungrammatical. Nostalgia is all that keeps the teacher reading: the ungarded child might let a variety of cats out of family bags, revealing Dad as an alcoholic, Mum as a nag or little brother as a swank.

Carol Thatcher's *Diary of an Election* shares most of the characteristics of this type of essay. Like the heroines in *June and Schoolfriend* or *Bunny*, wherever she goes, a bubble containing exclamation marks gallops with her. Everything merits a gasp of admiration or astolishment. Though everyone else in the world knew that there would be a June election, Carole, awoken in Tasmania with the news of her mother's announcement, flew into a terrible tizz. "My emotions were muddled between amazement at hearing that the balloon had gone up", she recollects, "and horror at having my slumbers interrupted with such a bombshell."

What made the balloon such a bombshell was that Carole, rumoured to be a journalist on the *Daily Telegraph*, had been commissioned by an astute publisher to hand in her account of "What I Did At The Hustings" on the night of June 10, the very day of the General Election. Before she left Tasmania, her mother telephoned her. "I don't know if you've heard" she said. "Yes", interrupted, and lobbed in, "Why now?"

The gist of her reply was the one that she gave everyone - about uncertainty and speculation. She added that certain international investments weren't being made in Britain because the perpetual state of election filters was scaring off the prospective investors, which was bad for the country, the economy and the pound.

Not content to rest on her laurels with this quality of revelation, Carole

flew back to England, spending the first, quiet days of the election brushing up her English. "These are very much early days in the campaign, with a little sniping but no real getting to grips with the issues' dogfights." But once the campaign got going, Carole followed "Mum" everywhere - out of factories and into factories, out of coaches and into coaches, always with her coached and well-coached faith. "Her mission between now and polling day," Carole reveals dispassionately, "is to tell the achievements of the last four years and to expose the Labour Party's Manifesto as the devastating document and extreme left-wing set of proposals it really is."

When Carole gets into her stride and begins to feel relaxed at her typewriter (or - perhaps - Dictaphone) a stage of the hippy enters her vocabulary: "hassles", "junks", and even "vibes" abound, and "Mum" is at one point "positively knackered". But the moment "Mum" is attacked, Carole switches back to the language of the Head Girl at St Hilda's. Of the persistent questions of a viewer on BBC's *Nationwide* programme, she says "The best way to describe what went on the air is that it represented an example of the most crass nastiness and discourtesy shown to a Prime Minister on a television programme."

Is one's nosiness rewarded? Alas, no. Carole has made every effort to find out what might interest the reader, and then she has omitted it. On page 130, she tells us, "Dad met the Militant Tendency", but that is where she ends her story. The one slightly fishy fact in the book is that the Prime Minister signed "Yours Prime Minister" on her election address no less than eight times before getting to the point. Otherwise, The Rt Hon Penny, passed from rally to studio to walkabout, emerges as glancing, unclipped and brassy as when she set forth.

Development in British Politics (26pp. Macmillan. £15, paperback £5.95. 0 333 35184 3) edited by Henry Drucker, Patrick Dunleavy, David Ganhall and Gillian Peel is divided into three parts: "The Constants" which contains, among others, a contribution on "The Resurgence of Ideology"; "New Worlds" which deals with such subjects as "The Politics of the Third Party" and "The Political Science of British Politics".

Subfusc Scarlett

Julia O'Faolain

ANNE EDWARDS

The Road to Tara: The Life of Margaret Mitchell
369pp. Hodder and Stoughton.
£9.55.
0 340 32348 5

Those who fall with the sword often use the pen to transmute old shame to old glory and writers from the American South were long food of the trick. This is understandable. After all, the South is the only place where American citizens lost a war on home ground. Two anecdotes from Anne Edwards's life of Margaret Mitchell make the point.

The first concerns a moment in 1911 when the ten-year-old Margaret, who had heard tales of Southern gallantry since birth, discovered "to her shocked disbelief" that the South had not won the war. Her informants were black field hands on her aunt's cotton plantation and though the biography leaves the story there one long to know more. In what spirit, for instance, did those connoisseurs of defeat pass on the state news? The second incident was an exercise in symbolic rehabilitation. In December 1939 the film of Mitchell's novel, *Gone with the Wind*, had its world premiere in Atlanta, Georgia; a statewide holiday was proclaimed by the governor, and film celebrities arriving for the event were watched by crowds "larger than the combined armies that fought the battle of Atlanta". Confederate flags waved; the band played "Dixie", and for the entire state of Georgia it was, writes Ma Edwards, "the winning the Battle of Atlanta twenty-five years later". Those whom history will not vindicate can look to the movies.

Fair enough, but should a new biography continue the process and give legend upon legend? In her choice, Edwards claims that her choice of subject was due to "circumstances that seem in retrospect to have been guided by fate". This turns out to mean that having written a life of Vivian Leigh and a sequel to *Gone with the Wind* "as a book which ... would then be adapted for a screenplay", she turned next to Margaret Mitchell, who captivated her with "the aura of mystery, defiance and drama that surrounded her

extraordinary life and her tragic and dramatic death".

Recycling researched material is a respectable practice and Edwards might have been wiser to admit that this was what she was doing. As it is, the hype leads to disappointment. One looks in vain in *The Road to Tara* for mystery, and the "tragic and dramatic death" boils down to Mitchell's being killed by a car some blocks from home at the age of forty-eight.

Margaret (Peggy) Mitchell was born into a comfortable Atlanta family. Her father was a lawyer, her maternal grandmother a wholesale grocer and she had an aunt with magnolia skin who injected her with a dose of Southern resentment and romance. Her mother, a feminist, urged her to get an education but died during Peggy's first year at Smith College. She promptly abandoned plans to be a doctor, dropped out and returned to

Atlanta, where she met Red Upshaw, her first husband and the model for Rhett Butler. He was a student and an occasional bootlegger who was considered "wild" and "dashing". Peggy, a flirt, had hitherto enjoyed "pushing her beauty to the very edge of control - at which crucial moment she would become all righteous indignation". The marriage broke up after a few months. Upshaw left, came back and, after some teasing in the bedroom, battered Peggy, who had to be hospitalized. There was a divorce and in 1925 she married John Marsh, a journalist who encouraged her to become a reporter and later prodded her into writing her novel. Edwards notes that "Though Peggy gloried in ... playing the Southern coquette, sex itself had been a painful, distressing experience ... Marsh had made no demands ... and ... she felt confident he would never take advantage of his position as her

husband". Interestingly, having moved from a wild man to a tame one, she made her heroine, Scarlett, do the reverse. Romance is written by and for those who prefer prettification to analysis or action and, it is striking that Mitchell was propelled first by her mother who got her as far as Smith and then by Marsh. Daily, when she was writing her novel, she read him extracts which he would correct - and later she was touched about rumours that he had helped write it.

Anne Edwards links the success of *Gone with the Wind* with the insecurities and gloom of the Depression. Its publication, she feels, "marked a real upturn ... in the American people's pride in their own accomplishment". Seen as a "harbinger of ... a national literature", she considers that it "celebrated the American past in a way that the novels of Willa Cather, William Faulkner, and Thomas Wolfe had not". Early

reviewers compared it to the works of Hardy, Tolstoy and Dickens, but Scott Fitzgerald considered it to have "one of the elements that make literature". Anne Edwards prefers to come down on neither side. Her last word on her second-last page is "Whether or not *Gone with the Wind* is a masterpiece has always been a matter of controversy".

Day-to-day chronicling is Edwards's forte and she informs us minutely about Margaret Mitchell's hypochondria, clothes and quarrels with her publishers, and about the mountains of letters she wrote to fans and reviewers - nearly 20,000 in four years. Flirting with them as once she had flirted with men, she flattered away the time and energies which might have gone into a second novel. *Gone with the Wind* had drained her: it was a brick of a book, a freak statistic which has outlasted every work in hard cover except for the Bible.

Newspaperman report

O. R. McGregor

MICHAEL LEAPMAN

Barefaced Check: The apotheosis of Rupert Murdoch
269pp. Hodder and Stoughton.
£9.55
0 340 28211 8

In thirty-one years and from fairly small beginnings in Australia, Rupert Murdoch, now aged fifty-two, has put together a massive enterprise stretching over three continents. He publishes books, newspapers and periodicals, but his interests go far beyond the printed word: he controls television stations as well as an airline, and he is involved in industries which range from farming to oil and natural gas. This now fashionable attachment to mid-Victorian economic and moral notions may well create a market for the publications of a latter-day Samuel Smiles who will record and praise the achievements of today's exponents of the virtues of industry and self-help. Among these, Mr Murdoch will undoubtedly be in the front rank.

On any showing, Murdoch's career has been remarkable; hence it raises many questions. From the business and

financial angle, what were the circumstances which favoured the expansion and profitability of his group? What desires have driven him, and do they stem from the protestant ethic or from a different sort of compulsion? Is his purchase of *The Times* perhaps to be interpreted as a modern example of conspicuous consumption, a form of costly entertainment which Murdoch offers daily to top people? Did he chiefly seek power or riches or may he simply take pleasure in running a successful business in which control remains in his own hands? How does his style of management compare with the practice of others past and present? Intriguing questions arise concerning the social status of entrepreneurs and of their different situations and ranking in Australia, Britain and the United States. Indeed, it would be easy to compile a long catalogue of such questions. Some, however, will wish to know what can be learned from Murdoch's conduct of newspapers in different parts of the world, about the conditions to which a free press can exist and about the actual relationships of proprietors with their editors and journalists. What light does the formation and behaviour of the Murdoch group shed upon possible answers to the question: ought governments to be empowered to scrutinize and regulate the buying and selling of newspapers

on grounds other than the desire to restrict concentration and monopoly? Should a proprietor be able to do as he pleases with this form of property? Does the experience of those who have worked for Murdoch suggest that the ethics of journalism and the cohesiveness of its practitioners could effectively limit his power as a proprietor? How well or badly is the public interest in newspapers served by Murdoch's type of management?

Unhappily, Michael Leapman gives scant attention to such questions and provides in the course of far too long a book very little in the way of usable information for answering questions about Murdoch and his activities. It is difficult to infer from the text what questions Leapman had in mind to answer. What he provides is, first, a brief account of Murdoch's family background, though it seems to add little to what was already in print. Then there follows a historical narrative of episodes, limited very largely to Murdoch's dealings with newspapers and editors, strung out fortynally in the rest of the book like old underwear on a clothes line.

Leapman says that his information "is the product of more than 120 interviews in Britain, Australia and the United States". In order to protect confidences, none of these sources is named. Murdoch declined to talk to

him "therefore descriptions of conversations and incidents in which (Rupert Murdoch) took part rely on the evidence of others present ...". Much that this biography contains is accordingly second or third-hand reporting; the reader is given neither the means nor the opportunity to judge the reliability of the sources. The best that can be said is that Leapman writes brightly, thus making bearable a tedious recital of what is alleged to have happened and to have been said by participants in the course of this or that acquisition or business deal.

Because Leapman has no main theme, his documentation would be unhelpful even if it could be relied on, for it amounts mostly to no more than a patchwork of unrelated conversations. Oddly, he appears to have little interest in his subject's personality. It seems reasonable to think it unlikely that anyone could have Murdoch's achievements under his belt and be as dull, simple-minded and as crudely motivated as the cardboard figure which flops over from Leapman's pages. If indeed he is like that, an explanation, however tentative, would be fascinating. Even the title of the book is puzzling: the reader is given few grounds for believing that Mr Murdoch has a habit of insolence (or is "barefaced check" a delicate reference to page 37) and none for crediting him with divinity.

The eyes and ears of Number Ten

Victoria Glendinning

MARCIA FALKENDER

Downing Street in Perspective
280pp. Weldon and Nicolson.
£10.95.
0 297 78107 3

In her acknowledgments at the beginning of *Downing Street in Perspective*, Marcia Falkender mentions those people who researched, typed, transcribed, and typed and "helped with all the tedious jobs involved in putting a book together". A book is not something that is written, then; it is "put together", and there is a fair bit of tedium in the process. It follows that this is not an inspired publication; and the number of sentences beginning "As I said before" suggests that there was only so much material that the author had, or chose, to impart.

In this second book of reminiscence she covers the years 1970 to 1976, beginning when the Labour Party was out of office and ending with Harold Wilson's resignation after two short administrations. She begins with the resignation too - that surprise move that "hit the nation like a bolt from the blue". This event is, as the book says, "reminiscent of dramatics". But drama was present only for the ignorant, since the Political Secretary and others had apparently been in his confidence in the regard for over a year.

The most interesting and revealing parts of the book are, in fact, the author's meditations on her special role as Political Secretary, "political insider" and "political adviser" to Harold Wilson. It was a position she fought hard to establish; she refers briefly here to "daily struggles" for recognition back to 1964 when the inaugurated Labour's Political Office

inside Number 10 to be the "eyes and ears" of the PM against considerable opposition. Some of the struggles were about "trivial details" such as "whether or not I qualified for tea on a tray in china tea cups or coffee in a silver pot served in my room, or just a mug of tea made upstairs". There was also trouble with the civil servants when the Political Office first used the authoritative 10 Downing Street headed writing-paper for its own communications.

Nothing in this book diminishes or seeks to diminish the public image of the author as a very efficient and very determined *émancipée blonde* with a compelling "need to know". She enjoyed off-side diplomacy: in 1975 she passed unofficial messages from Wilson to the Prime Minister of Israel about a sudden shift in American policy on Israel. "Such activities were understandably viewed with hostility and irritation by the Foreign Office, and caused great difficulty both then and subsequently."

Ripping veins in plenty, then, but very important revelations? Wilson's later campaigns were facilitated by lots of loquacity and theatrical coaching from Stanley Baker and John Mortimer (there was, perhaps, a touch of Rumpole about him in those days); the strawberry jam and angel-cakes at Chequers are home-made and very nice; Mr Heath greatly improved the bathroom arrangements at Chequers and the WC at Number 10.

It's not all triumph. There are griefs, and not all of them connected with money. But after the Land Deals scandal - her brother's plans for the profitable disposal of the "loot" became impossible - Wilson was "more, the financial security I thought it would provide, for my retirement was not achieved, not has it been to this day". The most human story is about a meeting in Glasgow in 1973 at which

Wilson asked her to fetch him some information; leaving the unfamiliar room by what she thought was the door, she found herself in a dark cupboard. She didn't come out. She stayed there till the end of the meeting.

Wilson's controversial peer-making is simply not discussed, though her own elevation is mentioned briefly and sadly. She accepted her peerage with mixed feelings, bopping with Harold Wilson that the public acknowledgment would cause her to be seen in "a different context" after the furore over the Land Deals affair. "But it did not work out as I had hoped. I was very sorry then and I still am, though I hope that one day it will. Politics is not such fun. Myself, I'd rather sit in a dark cupboard."

The book ends with brief character sketches of "Leading Labour Personalities". In view of recent preoccupations they may be worth noting. Tony Benn has become a cult figure, almost in the way that Shirley Williams has become a cult figure. In his case there is, of course, more reason. Michael Foot's "appearance of simplicity" is in direct contradiction to the "real" Michael, who is "arrogant rather than humble, apparently lacking in self-doubt". Roy Jenkins is "unlike most senior politicians in that he is a 'man with friends'". Shirley Williams has "an ability to project an idealized version of herself", a myth that "fits where it touches", she is less "feminine" than Mrs Thatcher.

The general effect of this book, it may be deduced, is not of political or personal sophistication but of its absence. Yet in spite of the score-keeping and the ganging-up, it seems emphatically not a matter of children playing at grown-ups, but of grown-ups playing at grown-ups. If that is true of the experience, capable, successful Marcia Falkender, it may, dequintingly, be true of everyone else

Two of the most popular essay titles set by third teachers to young children are "What I Did On My Holidays" and "A Day in the Life of a Penny". The completed essays tend to be episodic, over-excited and ungrammatical. Nostalgia is all that keeps the teacher reading: the ungarded child might let a variety of cats out of family bags, revealing Dad as an alcoholic, Mum as a nag or little brother as a swank.

Carol Thatcher's *Diary of an Election* shares most of the characteristics of this type of essay. Like the heroines in *June and Schoolfriend* or *Bunny*, wherever she goes, a bubble containing exclamation marks gallops with her. Everything merits a gasp of admiration or astolishment. Though everyone else in the world knew that there would be a June election, Carole, awoken in Tasmania with the news of her mother's announcement, flew into a terrible tizz. "My emotions were muddled between amazement at hearing that the balloon had gone up", she recollects, "and horror at having my slumbers interrupted with such a bombshell."

What made the balloon such a bombshell was that Carole, rumoured to be a journalist on the *Daily Telegraph*, had been commissioned by an astute publisher to hand in her account of "What I Did At The Hustings" on the night of June 10, the very day of the General Election. Before she left Tasmania, her mother telephoned her. "I don't know if you've heard" she said. "Yes", interrupted, and lobbed in, "Why now?"

The gist of her reply was the one that she gave everyone - about uncertainty and speculation. She added that certain international investments weren't being made in Britain because the perpetual state of election filters was scaring off the prospective investors, which was bad for the country, the economy and the pound.

Not content to rest on her laurels with this quality of revelation, Carole

Stone unturned

John Stokes

CAREY SCHOFIELD

Jagger
240pp. Methuen. £7.95.
0 413 51580 X

In medieval pictures of the dance of death, the living join in promenade with the dead. The living are arranged in hierarchy - from monarch to common man - while the dead may be either a group or a single figure; a lolling skeleton. The moral is less a call to repentance than a reminder that in the company of death all are equal. At the Rolling Stones sang it in "early days". "Have you seen your mother, baby, standing in the shadow?" - a point made more blackly in the 1976 video - they had become better acquainted with mortality. By the time they recorded "Dancing with Mr D", Mick Jagger had become both victim and dancer with himself.

Brief lives dominate Carey Schofield's dutiful celebration of the star's fortieth birthday. Brian Jones drowns at the bottom of his Sussex swimming-pool, Tara Browne bal a ball car accident, providing a lyric for the Beatles; Meredith Hunter, a black Californian, is stabbed by Hall's Angels at the Altamont Festival; and Brian Epstein falls prey to his own private demons; only Keith Richards keeps on taking chances. It's all, as we used to say, too much; though to make the most of it now would be to play straight into the hands of Jagger,

whose giggles and grunts often leave it to others, less canny than himself, to articulate his significance. Faced with a trickster, Ms Schofield sensibly adopts a calm gaze and applies some rudimentary sociology.

Jagger was born in Dartford in 1943. Growing up in the London suburbs in the 1950s, with no history apart from that which young parents were anxious to forget, fantasies were needed: why not make believe that south of the river could double for the south side of Chicago, that Rolling Broadway could reverberate like its New York namesake? Jagger's later incarnations are far less fun than the inventions that he once shared with his generation: aristocratic debauchery has always had its place among middle-class ambitions, but Chuck Berry on the tube was a more exhilarating ride than the jaded salomier's cruise to Mustang. Jagger's first stop was the LSE and a flat in Ede Grove where, like many students of the time, he was cultivated squalor. For Jagger and his friends it didn't last the statutory three years; the time was ripe, the people too.

Jagger has always surrounded himself with educators in the ways of the world. At the start they included Alexis Korner with his encyclopaedic knowledge of the blues, Chelsea designer Christopher Obbe, art impresario Robert Fraser. Later in the 1960s, other mentors appeared, like the self-styled "Miles", a busy entrepreneur who ran India bookshop and edited *International Times*; and Donald Cammell, who wrote and produced the film *Performance*. In 1968, Jagger, started, in 1968, the band, divided we're remembered variety



Mick Jagger in Cologne, reproduced from *The Rolling Stones: The Last Tour* (128pp. Sidgwick and Jackson, £5.95. 0 283 98980 7) with photographs by Philip Kamin and text by James Karnbach.

Schofield has collected from Jagger's friends suggest that theirs are the memoirs that publishers should be queuing for, rather than the autobiography that Jagger, again with help, has recently sold and is now beginning to compose.

Cammell's *Performance* is a typical 1960s artefact. When underworld met undergound in Poyls Square, London backshot of the "United we stand, divided we're remembered" variety

(midway between Pinter and *Minder*) runs up against psychodelic vengence. In a suitably numbed version of himself, Jagger ("I just want to get my skull completely empty") plays a retired rock star whose liberina lifestyle provokes the Cockney aneur: "Comical little geezer, you'll look funny when you're fifty."

Half a million attended the Hyde Park concert in 1969; maybe, half a dozen heard Shelley's words "We decay, I

like corpses in a charnel" when Jagger in Dartford/Delta dialect drowled *Adonais* in memory of Brian Jones. In the 1970s Teonyson's Tithonus took over. "Why should a man desire in sooty way to vary from the kindly race of men?" Suburban boys who had grown up to the 1950s knew exactly why: money and girls were their answer. For Jagger, it seems, they still are. Schofield collapses recent history into a mere fifty pages, chronicling no fresh scandals. Blanca Perez Moreno de Macias ("an old-style courtesan" in the loyal words of friend Cammell) comes and goes, a million pounds better off; Prince Rupert Loewenstein, merchant banker, comes and stays; Jerry Hall, Texas model and horse-breeder, comes, goes, and comes back again. Charlie Watts, the Rolling Stones drummer, loses his hair, Mick takes up jogging and, in a sad vignette, his daughter goes through a difficult time at school.

Back in the suburbs, Schofield suggests, contemporaries from Dartford Oromar, now solicitors and university lecturers, are struggling with mortgages and career problems. "Mick Jagger", she hazards, "must be the only one whose present life would be envied by his fifteen-year-old self." In Jagger's generation there were all manners of energies for le jumps and japes to stir. After all, "Life was never better than in 1963." Between the head of the Chatterley fan and the Beatles' first LP. In 1964 we asked for more, and got the Rolling Stones. You can't always get what you want, but sometimes - even in the suburbs - you get what you need.

A general out of step

John B. Dunlop

PETRO GRIGORENKO

Memoirs
Translated by Thomas P. Whitney
462pp. Collins. £15.
0 00 272276 3

Let it be said at the outset: this is an important and in many ways fascinating book. Born in 1907 into a poor Ukrainian peasant family, Petro Grigorenko rose to the rank of major-general in the Soviet army, serving with distinction in the war against Hitler. A fervent communist and convinced Stalinist, he greeted Khrushchev's famous 1956 "secret speech", which initiated the process of de-Stalinization in the USSR, with shock and dismay. Yet five years later, in September 1961, we find that erstwhile true believer speaking out at a party conference of the Lenin District of Moscow, advocating the democratization of Soviet elections and the responsibility to the voters of those elected. By 1964, "an commission of experts" presided over by Academician Sneshevsky, with the special participation of a Professor named Lunts, determined that Grigorenko was insane, and he underwent the first of two gruelling incarcerations in a prison mental hospital. In 1977, Grigorenko was permitted to go to the United States for an operation and, while there, was deprived of his Soviet citizenship.

Grigorenko calls this volume of memoirs a "confession". The term is apt, since the book's essential purpose is to recount how a morally alert individual became gradually enmeshed in the webs of ideological fanaticism, from which he began to extricate himself only at the age of fifty. *Memoirs* is the story of a spiritual journey which took Grigorenko from a boyhood commitment to Orthodox Christianity to a fanatical adherence to Marxism-Leninism and then back to Orthodoxy, and to a moderate form of Ukrainian nationalism. The book traces this journey with meticulous care and religious honesty of detail. Coming from a "Red" village in the civil war, Grigorenko was naturally inclined to be sympathetic to the new Bolshevik state of "workers and peasants". A reading of Bukharin's *The ABCs of Communism* provided a particularly strong stimulus for an awe-inspiring faith in communism.

The simplicity of its concept shocked me. The history of humanity, it said, is the history of class warfare. Until the working class - the proletariat - entered the arena of history, society was divided into the oppressors and the oppressed. The oppressors, the ruling class, preserved their own privileges and exploited the other classes. The oppressed did not dare even to dream of the benefits enjoyed by the oppressors. . . . The

proletariat takes power into its hands not like the classes ruling before it, to make eternal its ruling position, but to raise everyone to its own level, to transform society into a unified collective of workers in which there will be no difference between mental and physical labor. . . .

And Grigorenko recalls: "We received such ideas enthusiastically. The happiness of all people was our goal." It took him some forty years to realize that this new religion was false.

When Stalin emerged as leader in the late 1920s, Grigorenko saw him as an embodiment of the new creed. "I agreed with Stalin's every word," he liberated me from all doubts. Grigorenko believed so intensely in communism and in Stalin (the two were identified in his mind) that he was prepared "to accept any crime" in their name.

Yet, as he realizes in retrospect, people were always at work seeking to cure him of his enthrallment. Thus his father and uncle spoke scathingly to him of the forced collectivization of agriculture and predicted the catastrophic famine which in fact shortly ensued. After the war, certain reformist Marxists, friends of the family, sought to show him the difference between Lenin's prescriptions and the present state of affairs. Vasily Teslya, a graduate of the Institute of Red Professors, informed him that "communism did not exist in the Soviet Union and that the men ruling the country were ordinary gangsters. . . . A staff writer for *Pravda*, Moisei Chernenko, taught him "to understand current events, to get to the truth, and, in reading the Soviet press, to read between the lines". An encounter with Soviet antisemitism dealt a blow to Grigorenko's "sociologically naive views of people".

It was, however, the Khrushchev period which opened the first serious fissures in Grigorenko's belief system. By undermining the monolithic Stalinist world-view, Khrushchev unintentionally brought into focus the marked failure of the Soviet political system and Soviet society. A man of action, Grigorenko decided to do something about it.

It was Grigorenko's speech at the Lenin district party conference in 1961, referred to earlier, which seems to have been the decisive milestone in his spiritual odyssey. The Soviet general who gave the impromptu speech was still a dedicated communist. His savaging by those present, including the party Secretariat member Boris Ponomarev, and the sanctions later taken against him, convinced him that the country was indeed ruled by "gangsters. . . . dissolute, demoralized

men". "More and more", he recalls, "the idea entered my head that the social structures created in our country was not a socialist one, that the ruling party was not communist."

This insight prompted him to re-examine the writings of Lenin. To his growing discomfiture, he began to realize that the seeds of this party's undemocratic behaviour had been planted by Lenin himself, but for a long time he refused to accept the logic of this realization, i.e. that there is substantial continuity between Leninism and Stalinism.

By the summer of 1963, the major-general had, incredibly, resolved "to battle the leadership of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union)". Soon he was mailing anonymous lampoons to *Pravda* and, together with his son, organizing an underground alliance for the rebirth of true communism. In a series of leaflets, he attacked such abuses as the Soviet people's lack of rights and the omnipotence of bureaucratic power. Eventually we find him handing out leaflets at the Hammer and Sickle factory in Moscow. To the astonished workers, he declared, "I'm tired of being afraid." On one occasion, wearing his general's uniform, he left a leaflet at the Pavlovsk Station. Sooo, inevitably, the KGB was on his trail and, just as inevitably, he was arrested.

The Soviet authorities were understandably puzzled and disturbed by the case of this general turned dissident. Semichastny, chairman of the KGB, and his first deputy, Zakharov, were both present when Grigorenko was brought to prison - an unusual honour for a political prisoner. The entire Politburo reportedly listened to the tapes of his interrogation by a KGB official. And it was decided to declare this general with reformist illusions to be insane.

Freed from the mental asylum during the confusion accompanying the change of leadership in 1964 (Khrushchev had not only wanted to keep him to the psychiatric but insisted that this insane man be demoted in the military rank), Grigorenko soon entered the mainstream of the nascent Soviet human rights movement. To earn a living, the ex-general had to work in vegetable warehouses in the Crimea and Moscow, watched over at all times by "four athletic young men".

Despite the surveillance, he met Bukovsky, Ginzburg, Yakir, and other leading dissenters; Sakharov sent him a copy of his now-famous memorandum; Solzhenitsyn invited him out for a night-long chat ("Pyotr Grigoryevich, it is your duty before the people and before God to write the history of the last war. . . . You have to deglamorize the war, show it as it really was"). In what was perhaps Grigorenko's most notable feat as a dissident, he championed the cause of the Crimean

Tatars, a displaced nation of 200,000 who had been forcibly removed from their homeland by Stalin. It is no exaggeration to say that Grigorenko is a national hero to this people.

In May 1969, Grigorenko was arrested for a second time, and on this occasion the régime seems to have resolved to break its intrepid opponent. He now spent forty-nine harrowing months in various prison hospitals which had "sprouted like mushrooms" during Andropov's tenure as chairman of the KGB. It was during this incarceration that Grigorenko regained and deepened his boyhood religious faith.

Interment in a mental hospital, Grigorenko observes, is far worse than being interrogated as a criminal:

If you say to the interrogator that there is no freedom of the press in the USSR, that means that you are a slanderer, a criminal. If you say the same thing to a doctor-psychiatrist he says that this is delirium, a mental illness. If you say to the interrogator that elections should be made elections . . . that means you are a criminal. . . . If you repeat the same thing to a psychiatrist he will ascribe to you "concepts of reforms". . . . And so you have a whole clump of symptoms of schizophrenia. In order to be cured of such "illnesses," you have to renounce your own convictions. . . . And if you are unwilling to thus recuperate, you will be subjected to an indefinitely long "treatment" - lifelong. This gives you something to think about.

In unemotional tones, Grigorenko describes the horrors and indignities to which political prisoners are subjected in Soviet prison mental hospitals. The prisoner who refuses to take orally the drug aminazin (similar to the Western Thorazine) has his buttocks slashed with a surgeon's knife and the drug forcibly injected, a process which causes painful nodes to erupt, making walking, sitting, and sleeping extremely difficult. Another drug, haloperidol (similar to the Western Haldol) can cause asphyxia and body tremors. These medications, it should be emphasized, were forcibly administered to mentally healthy individuals interned solely for their political or religious beliefs. As for Grigorenko, he was forbidden to have a pen or pencil, was taken to the bathroom so rarely that he became incontinent, and was kept in cramped quarters with the genuinely insane:

"For the first two months they confined me in a cell of six square meters with a delirious patient who had committed a heinous murder. It is not pleasant to spend the whole day staring into the face of a man who either sits motionless with a blank expression or speaks incessantly. It is even less pleasant to awaken and see this person

poised over you ready to hurl himself upon you." While among us could survive a week of such "treatment". Yet Grigorenko endured four years of it, did not break, and was ultimately released from this hell. (He believes that intarsessions by Solzhenitsyn and President Nixon were especially helpful.)

While Grigorenko's spiritual journey is the central focus of these memoirs, the book contains much else that is of interest. Military historians will find his account of Stalin's purge of the military, of the Second World War, and of his experiences at the Pruzna Military Academy absorbing reading. It is noteworthy that Grigorenko has a low opinion of many hallowed Soviet generals such as Budenny, Timoshenko and Zhukov, while he has great respect for others who are never mentioned, for example Shern, who was shot during the purges. He has a special dislike of Zhukov, whose unparalleled ferocity and readiness "not to spare the men" endeared him to Stalin. Grigorenko also includes some fascinating paragraphs on Zhukov's role in Khrushchev's successful struggle against the "anti-party group".

There are also some enlightening pages on Brezhnev, whom Grigorenko met during the war. Brezhnev is described as utterly ruthless, a cynic and sycophant. He wanted to keep Grigorenko in a mental hospital in 1964, but it was too late; the general had already been released. "They let him out too soon! Too bad!" Brezhnev is said to have exclaimed. There are also brief descriptions of other Soviet leaders, including Koyagin, Khrushchev's defence minister, Malinovsky, and Demichev.

The book also contains elements of love story. Grigorenko's second wife, Zinaida, herself the daughter of a communist true believer, consistently exhibited character, intelligence and integrity under unspeakably trying conditions. She now shares her husband's life in the emigration.

Grigorenko's *Memoirs* are somewhat uneven in style. Certain sections, especially the description of the Khrushchev years, make riveting reading. In some places, the narrative is less tightly structured. Always, however, it keeps one's interest.

Petro Grigorenko has gone to America to live among what he calls "kind and proud people". From his much-deserved sanctuary, his like Solzhenitsyn and the late Andrei Sakharov, issues the warning: "The West must never forget the Soviet Union's goal - world domination."

As for myself, I look to the day when a monument will be erected to this marvellous general in Kiev, capital of the Ukraine.

Escape from illusion

Frances Spalding

Ben Nicholson: the years of experiment 1919-1939
Kettle's Yard, Cambridge

William and Ben Nicholson
Browse and Darby, 19 Cork Street, London W1

The Nicholson
Crane Kalman Gallery, 178
Brompton Road, London SW3

When Ben Nicholson died in 1982 he was a respected but neglected figure: there had been no major showing of his art in this country since the 1969 Tate Gallery retrospective and none of the books on him was to print. This state of affairs may have been partly of the artist's own making, for critical opinion of his work had remained consistently high. Moreover, the situation has now been rectified by the concurrent appearance of three exhibitions: *William and Ben Nicholson* at Browse and Darby, Cork Street (until 30 July); *The Nicholson* at Crane Kalman, Knightsbridge, celebrating an artistic genealogy that spans six generations (until 30 July); and the third and most important, the retrospective at Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, which examines the inter-war years, the most crucial in Nicholson's development.

All three exhibitions suggest that Ben Nicholson's relationship with his father, Sir William, was complex, that it both impeded and directed his early career. After three-and-a-half terms at the Slade during 1910-11, he spent the next seven years producing little, travelling abroad - mostly for reasons of health. He dissociated himself from the talented generation that he mixed with at the Slade and from the arguments over Post-Impressionism then disrupting the elegant naturalism that his father practised. "It was in the painting world and trying to get out," he later recalled, for both his parents as well as his uncle were artists. Wanting to escape, he was nevertheless bound by admiration for the "poetic idea" expressed in his father's still lifes and landscapes. When in 1918 Ben Nicholson began to devote himself reluctantly to painting, it was automatically Sir William's precepts that he followed.

At first glance, paintings like "The Lustre Vase" and "Blue Bowl in Shadow" at Browse and Darby and "The Red Neckline" at Kettle's Yard could be mistaken for the elder Nicholson's work. They maintain an undisturbed equilibrium; the concentration on the single object, the even lighting and low tones create an impression of stillness. However, they lack Sir William's fluent touch and the subtle suffocating illumiensm from which Ben Nicholson afterwards sought escape. None of these pre-1920 paintings was included in the 1969 retrospective as they were thought by Charles Harrison, the selector, to have "little relevance" to Nicholson's subsequent development. He now discusses seriously the even more important question: under what circumstances might the Soviet Union be tempted to launch its blitzkrieg? The distinction is crucial. Soviet theory could merely be an application of the best form of defence. On the other hand, the preoccupation with the concept of blitzkrieg might be a sign that the Soviet Union is really planning a war of aggression.

On this issue Vigor refrains from coming to a conclusion, though he leaves us with the impression that he takes a gloomy view of Russian intentions. The Soviet military do not make state policy; they are an instrument, although they constitute a very important interest group in the state. An unwary reader might miss this point and be tempted to make more of this exposition of Soviet strategic theory than he should.

on the other hand, looks back to the 1890s and the vogue for Velázquez. Two years later Nicholson has discarded this unhappy marriage of styles in favour of the crude drawing and tart colour found in "Pink House in the Snow" (1921). This and other paintings at Cambridge, together with Vineyard in Winter" at Crane Kalman, give an indication of the various methods he explored during the early 1920s; as the artist recalled, "it was a very important period of fast and furious experiment".

His subsequent assimilation of native and European influences is well charted at Kettle's Yard. Jeremy Lewison's catalogue (80pp. £7.50. 0 907074 17 0) not only extends understanding of Nicholson's art in relation to his time but is also a model of clarity and condensed information. The influence of Nicholson's first wife Winifred is, however, still underplayed, and one is therefore glad that she occupies a central role in the Crane Kalman show. Like Ben, she too came from an artistic family, her grandfather, George Howard, 9th Earl of Carlisle, having been associated with the Pre-Raphaelites. She, perhaps even more than the Victorians, provided the antidote to Sir William's nomenclature and out-of-date dandyism. Her unaffected directness and musical use of colour encouraged her husband's search for pictorial immediacy; at a time when he was unable to see any way forward, her originality proved infectious and stimulating.

With Christopher Wood, Ben and Winifred Nicholson developed a lyrical and apparently naive approach to landscape painting, further encouraged by their discovery in 1928 of the primitive artist Alfred Wallis. Though this style contained many elements that Ben Nicholson later developed, he was too much his father's son to remain content for long with its spontaneous, child-like vision. His meeting with and subsequent marriage to Barbara Hepworth and his growing familiarity with a European avant-garde brought an increase of confidence and fastidiousness. The stumbling, unassertive line in his work of the early 1920s takes on an assured flourish when incised into the glass ground in "Girl at Mirror" of 1933. Like his father's control of tone, this line elegantly displays a certain quality; it allows the artist to parade his individuality and invites the spectator similarly to indulge his or her response.

The appearance of the free-floating line coincides with that of the mirror image. This, like Nicholson's landscapes, operates both as object and illusion. Combined with the influence of Braque and Picasso, it encouraged Nicholson's interest in shifting depth and ambiguous planar relationships. His first relief, in which the illusion of depth becomes a reality, hangs at Kettle's Yard next to "Musical Instruments", suggesting that the former is merely a further abstraction on the motif of the gulliar, the sound-hole becoming the carved circle. Near by hangs one of the white reliefs which brought these years of experiment to a climax. Its projecting "rectangle" dropped down slightly from the edge of the relief, suggests buoyancy to the inclined plane. Nowhere else do these three shows do we find such quintessential expression of taste, such reduction of means, such concentration on something as definite "as a violet or a rose".

Ben Nicholson: the years of experiment 1919-1939 remains at Kettle's Yard until August 29 and then travels to Cartwright Hall, Bradford (September 10 to October 9); the Royal Museum, Canterbury (October 24 to November 8); and Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery (December 2 to January 8, 1984).

The Tate Gallery is to mount the latest exhibition yet held of the work of John Piper from November 30 to January 22, 1984, covering all aspects of his work to painting, drawing, design and the theatre.



"Pink House in the Snow", c.1921, by Ben Nicholson, from the exhibition at Kettle's Yard reviewed here.

Sitting pretty

Katherine Duncan-Jones

SHAKESPEARE
Cymbeline
BBC2

While few modern readers of Cymbeline would go the whole way with Johnson in his refusal to "waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility", it is undeniable that any modern director of the play must make some positive decisions about how to deal with this clogged, often obscure, and highly complicated romance. What Eilish Moshinsky decides to do, in the BBC 2 production, is to impose on the cluttered world of Shakespeare's Ancient Britain the lucid visual images of the great Dutch Masters. This produces some delightful effects, especially in the opening scenes of the play. The Second Gentleman, who asks all those helpful questions about the status quo in Cymbeline's court, becomes a dignified Rembrandt-old lady in a ruff (Aimee Delamain). Claire Bloom makes an icily beautiful Queen, especially when proposing experiments on live animals to her leather-bonneted Doctor (Hugh Thomas). Imogen sitting alone waiting for news of her exiled husband is a Van Dyck beauty in a Vermeer interior.

These images, and many more, are what is gained. What is lost, however, is almost all the poetry, a good deal of the action, and all the sweet poignancy which made this a favourite play of Keats, Swinburne and Tennyson. Exterior scenes are kept to a minimum, though the text would seem to call for many. The mountains of Wales are for some reason presented as the steppes of Russia. Instead of a cave, the Welsh exiles inhabit a comfortable if plain dacha, so the vital contrast between the court and the pastoral world is lost. The most painful casualty is Fidele's funeral, which happens inside the dacha with the princes squinting uncomfortably over the corpse. Instead of promising a perpetual strewing of "fairest flowers" whilst summer lasts, the boys thrust two dusty-looking dried flowers into Imogen's hands, and leave it at that. The Snow White-like domesticity of the pastoral episode is also eliminated; here is no "neat cooery", with Fidele cutting the vegetables into "characters". Helen Mirren's Imogen, more at ease as dressed by her than as chaste wife, is clearly no home-maker.

Because of its emphasis on painterly tableaux, this production is overwhelmingly static. Characters seem loath to rise from their high-backed chairs, and with a few exceptions, such as Cymbeline (Richard Johnson, looking like George V) and Belarius (Michael Gough), are apt to converse in whispers. Posthumus (Michael Pennington), sitting at a still-life breakfast in Platanus's elegant palazzo, scarcely looks up to receive Imogen's letter and Iachimo's report on the outcome of the wager. The dignified Lucius (Graham Crowden) declares war on Britain without rising from his seat at table. That useful messenger Pisanio, instead of being constantly on the move between Wales and Lud's Town, is often seen seated as he reads vital letters. Cloten (Paul Jesson), here presented as hisping and feppish, meditates rape and murder while loling on his bed in the firelight. This immobility cannot be entirely explained by the constraints of the medium. Opportunities for close-up are often missed. We have no detailed view of the diamond ring and bracelet exchanged by Imogen and Posthumus and surprisingly we are not allowed to see either the "mole cinque-spotted" on Imogen's left breast or the "sanguine star" on Guldentus's shoulder.

Overall, the gentle, almost sentimental texture of the play is doctored, in favour of an attempted intensity which becomes rather wearisome. The play offers repeated offerings of Shakespeare's earlier work. Iachimo, for instance, is a Tarquin who makes an inventory of Lucrece's bedroom furniture, rather than raping her - an Iago whose provocation of jealousy is bantering rather than malign. But here Robert Lindsay's Iachimo, in a black leather travelling outfit which makes it appear that he has left his Jacobean motor bike parked outside Cymbeline's palace, is clearly intended to pre-empt real menace; and what is more, it is by no means clear that Imogen dislikes his attentions. Her "What ho, Pisanio!" in the attempted seduction scene is so soft a voice that the lady scarcely protests at all, and her restless slumbers in the bedchamber scene are, the *Radio Times* preview suggested, intended to make us see Iachimo's visit as an enactment of her sexual fantasies. It is odd, though, that we see so much of Iachimo's nakedness, and so little of hers; odd, too, that Posthumus suddenly plants a kiss on the cheek of the British Lord to whom he has described the outcome of the battle with the Romans. Moshinsky seems at times intent on adding more puzzles to an already puzzling text. The cutting and rearranging of scenes in Act V does not make the story any plainer. Posthumus's vision comes over as a fragment from *Riddell's* *Jove* (Michael Horden) has no eagle and looks like a shabby old clergyman; the comic Jailer, whom Shaw called "just the thing to save the last act", is so cut as to waste an excellent little performance by Ray Mort. Patricia Hayes does very well as the Soothsayer in the closing minutes, expounding the prophecy with compelling authority. But boredom often threatens, and there might have been a case for using Shaw's *Cymbeline Refinished*, which gets Shakespeare's 485 lines in the final scene down to 89.

New Oxford Books:

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Professor Starr asserts that it was remarkable that the Roman Empire survived as long as it did. In exploring its longevity, he analyses the binding forces of government and army established by Augustus, the melting of these forces under subsequent emperors, and the eventual collapse of this network in the West. Illustrated £15. Paperback £4.95

The Attalid Kingdom

A Constitutional History
R. E. Allen

There has been a need for a new constitutional history of the Attalid Kingdom, the most important of the Kingdoms of Asia Minor that evolved as a result of the decline in Seleucid authority there in the third and second centuries BC. This book assesses the abundant new epigraphical evidence on the development of the Kingdom in its constitutional aspects, which throw new light on important areas of Attalid rule. £20

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Robert Parker

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Books III and IV of the *Physics*, consisting of five essays on the subjects of change, the infinite, place, void, and time, provide not only one of the earliest surviving examples of the application of Aristotelian dialectic, but also a classic expression of a durable philosophical treatment of these problems. This volume contains a new English translation and a philosophical commentary. £13.60. Paperback £8.95. Clarendon Aristotle Series

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A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship
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This book traces the course of Joseph Scaliger's early life, analyses his early work as an editor, and sets his work into the context of the history of classical scholarship in the Renaissance and the personal circumstances which shaped his interests. £27.60. Oxford Warburg Studies

Oxford University Press

Surprise, surprise

Wolf Mendi

P. H. Vigor

Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory
216pp. Macmillan. £25.
0 354 27970 0

One of the most serious problems in the current debate over national security and defence is the difficulty of knowing what the Russians really think and intend to do. For this we depend heavily on a handful of specialists who are students of Soviet affairs and have a command of the Russian language. P. H. Vigor is one of those few who can interpret the Russians to us and for this reason alone his book on the Soviet theory of blitzkrieg is to be welcomed.

To get the best out of this highly written and forcefully argued study, the reader should peruse it carefully, otherwise he may jump to conclusions which the author himself avoids. The book is about Soviet military theory, not about Soviet policy and intentions. In the Soviet Union, unlike the West, strategy in the nuclear age remains essentially the business of professional

military men. The soldier's job is to think about the potential enemies of the state; he must be prepared to fight the enemy and to overcome him in the event of hostilities. So it is natural that he should also try to devise winning strategies.

This is what the Soviet military theorists seek to do and Vigor shows from their writings how they have based on to the concept of the lightning war as the means with which to achieve their objectives. His principal contribution is to link the well-known tactics of the Soviet armed forces, which are designed for a mobile and fast-moving battle, to the Russian view that a war against a well-armed and technologically advanced opponent should be short.

Surprise is of the essence. There is no time for the niceties of formal declarations of war and slow-motion mobilization. Once the attack is launched, concentration of forces, speed of advance and the weight of the blow, coming from an unexpected direction, are the decisive factors in winning the initial campaign. But that campaign should also be the only one and lead to a rapid annihilation of the war.

The Soviet model of blitzkrieg is constructed on the basis of historical experience and Vigor explains in the most interesting passages of the book how the Russian strategists are astute students of past wars, some taken from their own and others from the Prussian/German campaigns in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Profiting from the lessons of the past, contemporary Soviet military thinkers and planners have developed a strategy which is described in the last chapter on "A possible Soviet scenario for the perfect Blitzkrieg". According to Vigor's scenario, the Russian forces would have reached the environs of Hanover by 4 am on Christmas Day, approximately four hours after the forward detachments first crossed the frontier from East Germany. But this is in the realm of speculation and does not take into account the inevitable confusion and fog of war, which not only affect the surprised defenders but also the best-laid plans of the attacker. More surprisingly still, the author hardly considers the possible psychological and physical impact of the great variety of nuclear weapons at the disposal of both sides.

One might criticise the book for other reasons. They include minor historical inaccuracies, such as the wrong date of Suworov's Italian campaign and the persistent reference to the "Treaty of Vienna" as having punctuated the Napoleonic Wars, when he must surely have meant the Treaty of Amiens (1802), and more substantial points such as the exaggerated importance attached to the Russian practice of blitzkrieg in the invasion of Manchuria in the last few days of the Second World War. The Japanese were in no position to offer serious resistance because the bulk of the Kwangtung Army had already been withdrawn and, in any case, they were in the process of looking for a way out of the conflict.

Vigor says that the Soviet Union has so far scrupulously observed the mandatory military commandment to all intending aggressors that "you must not bite off more than you can chew". This would be a reason why the Russians are more likely to plan an attack on Europe than on China. However, one wonders whether some Russians, at least, might not be asking themselves today whether Afghanistan has not turned out to be a particularly indigestible morsel.

That brings us to the fundamental problem, which is related to the political circumstances of the invasion of Afghanistan, but is not answered in this book. Vigor explains the Soviet theory of how to wage a war and how to do so by performing a very useful service, but he does not attempt to discuss seriously the even more important question: under what circumstances might the Soviet Union be tempted to launch its blitzkrieg? The distinction is crucial. Soviet theory could merely be an application of the best form of defence. On the other hand, the preoccupation with the concept of blitzkrieg might be a sign that the Soviet Union is really planning a war of aggression.

On this issue Vigor refrains from coming to a conclusion, though he leaves us with the impression that he takes a gloomy view of Russian intentions. The Soviet military do not make state policy; they are an instrument, although they constitute a very important interest group in the state. An unwary reader might miss this point and be tempted to make more of this exposition of Soviet strategic theory than he should.

commentary

Symbols and stones

Peter Kemp

Memories of the Future John Ruskin Channel 4

"Ruskin was a synthesizer: he brought things together," declared Robert Hewison. To illustrate this, *Memories of the Future* extensively catalogued his multifarious concerns - architecture and topography, painting and economics, cultural history, social planning, rocks and Rose Queens end road-building schemes. Pursuing the various paths his interest took, it explored Venice, Oxford and the Lake District. Presso extracts, sketches, water-colours, even a gently melancholy tune - linked out on a piano as the camera moved along its sepia score - testified to his creative range.

Nor was the diversity displayed in Ruskin's. There was also a marked difference of opinion between two of the programme's contributors. While Robert Hewison maintained that the unconsummated marriage to Effie was "really" rather a trivial incident in Ruskin's life, Peter Fuller vehemently insisted that it was of crucial importance. It was Ruskin's failure to connect with Effie, he asserted, that generated in him a compensatory taste for coupling the literal and the metaphorical through symbol. Hewison's reminder that "he was doing the same thing before he met Effie" might seem to have squashed this theory. But Fuller adhered to it and later spread it further, announcing that Ruskin "wanted to make Effie into a

kind of unconsummated symbol". But, after the wedding, Ruskin surely seemed keener on evading Effie than idealizing her. Nor does she appear to have provided especially promising material for his romanticism: meeting her when she was Mrs Millais, Henry James, for instance, found her "coarse, vulgar, jolly... as un-Ruskinish a creature as one could conceive". Such considerations would scarcely give pause to Fuller, though - a commentator most in his element when operating on a level of nebulous generalization, expatiating on such matters as "the mushy room cloud of the twentieth century" or delivering himself of large pronouncements much beaupetred with the demonstrative article. Ruskin "had this enormous difficulty with his feelings"; he made "these obsessive collections of stones"; "he began to have these strange ideas".

Elsewhere, the programme proved attractively precise and informative, with expertise expertly drawn upon. An aptly named Mrs Prickett made an instructive point about Ruskin's encouragement of local needcraft. His influence on church architecture was skilfully demonstrated by Paul Thompson in All Saints, Margaret Street. Paying especially close attention to the church's pulpit, intricately inlaid with a variety of stones, he explained that this was designed as a dismissal of the damage done to Biblical authority by the work of the geologists: as their hammers chipped at the Rock of Ages, William Butterfield, the architect, countered with a blazing forth of what was seen as the creator's mineral munificence - sermons in stones, as it were.

The programme offered some preaching of its own. As in the preceding week's film on William Morris, there was a rather emphatic holding forth about contemporary relevance. Gamely, the presenter scaled King's College Chapel to elicit from a mason on the roof his belief in the importance of hand-labour. Even more riskily perhaps, in view of Channel 4's current pestilence, Raymond Williams was allowed to use Ruskin as a basis for deploring advertising.

As with the programme on Morris, too, the film was pictorially splendid, covering a rich visual span - from Ruskin's fastidious recordings of Venetian architectural detail to a selection of Turner's misty fancies, from neo-Gothic interiors to atmospheric vistas of the Lakes. Pictures of Ruskin himself were amply in evidence as well, documenting his progress from dapper, self-engrossed-looking youthfulness to the ravaged old man whose disturbed eyes peered out through a tangle of hair and eyebrows like wild-life from undergrowth. Changes in the shape of Ruskin's thinking weren't always as graphically portrayed. And the programme entirely left out a key stage in his altering attitudes: stressing his early evangelical fervour, it never explained what swung him away from this. Yet Ruskin's stay in Turin in 1858, where study of Veronese's "Solomon and the Queen of Sheba" helped to effect his famous "unconversion", was, he later affirmed, "the crisis of the whole turn of my thoughts". As such, it surely merited a mention in a programme obviously aiming to give a comprehensive picture of its subject.

A dream of home

Elizabeth Winter

IVAN GONCHAROV

Obtemov
Dramatized by Matthew Walters
Radio 4

"I wasn't asleep, I was thinking." Aggrieved, Obtemov maintains his desire to be undisturbed by "life", chiding his splendidly idle, in a state between sleeping and thinking, the impossibility of action and making a very good case for his dusty, cluttered flat in St Petersburg as an excellent place to be. The outside world is so noisy, busy and artificial, moving about so trouble some, dressing in anything other than his capacious oriental dressing gown so inconvenient. Government service was a nightmare which he endured for two years, but now his chief occupation is dreaming up plans for his estate, for the moment when he returns to the country and starts living.

James Fox plays Obtemov in the radio dramatization by Matthew Walters of the translation of Goncharov's novel by Ann Dunnigan. He conveys the right degree of aristocratic languor, peevishness and innocent good humour as this Russian "baryn", intelligent and ineffectual, caught between grandiose plans and the inability to put on his own socks.

Within the novel "Obtemov's dream" forms a separate entity. It was published as such in 1849; the rest took Goncharov a further ten years to complete (he also had his problems). The dream evokes his childhood estate, Obtemovka, where in the sleepy contrived days passed tranquilly in harmony with the seasons and the church calendar. The child was wrapped in warmth and loving affection, regaled with stories of wood devils and bogatyr, all curiosity and inquisitiveness gradually stifled by loving admonitions. The radio play cleverly uses this dream as a leitmotif, yet strangely the voices calling out "be careful", "don't do that, it's dangerous" are, for the most part, those of stern men rather than the concerned pampering tones of nannies, aunts and mother. There is

perhaps here a certain degree of interference from Anglo-Saxon culture, as when "I'll make you some raspberry tea" comes over as a threat rather than a treat.

The flat northern voice of Alan Bennett as narrator (Goncharov himself was born in Simbirsk, the son of a merchant) provides the links between the scenes dealing with the central relationships. The most persistent of these is with Zakhar, the servant (John Baddely), crafty, cowardly, resentful, devoted, as faithful in his way to the dream as unthinkingly locked in the master-servant relationship. The involved power-struggles he engages in (wanting to please, yet wanting to get his own way), the comic impasse and hot-headed familiarity, make lively dialogue and good listening. Andrei Stolz (Nicky Henzen), Obtemov's childhood friend (but his father was German and had different ideas about the education of children) arrives to witness a typical scene of wrangling between master and servant. Amused and horrified, he determines to stir Obtemov, shake him up and restore his interest in work. To the urgent strains of the balalaika they start on so energetic programme of activity. Obtemov remains unconvinced, and exhausted. But before Stolz leaves again for a further business trip abroad, he introduces his friend to Olga Sergeyevna (Moir Leslie). Her affectionate teasing and her beautiful singing work a miracle; Obtemov is awakened. Their summer of courtship, the autumn of doubts, the final grief and separation (Obtemov has trouble keeping up the pace) follow the novel closely and convincingly.

What has to be omitted is the sensuous appeal of Obtemov's final haven, in the company of Aglaya Pshenitsyn (Auriel Smith), suffragette particularly in this respect. Her devilish comes across clearly, but where are the smells of cinnamon and vanilla, the coffee, cream and hot white rolls, the steaming cup of well-cooked pices which she produced for his gleaming approval? Difficult to convey on the air, admittedly, but said that the peace he found under her roof is deprived of these rich delights, making his decline seem the more abrupt.

Author, Author

Competition No 132

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office no later than August 12. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 132" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on August 19.

1. "Have something to amuse you meanwhile" - *The Times Literary Supplement*. The boy must have delivered it by mistake.

"As a matter of fact I ordered it," said Godfrey. "I hope you don't mind."

"Mind? Of course not, so long as you don't want to read me any of it aloud. It will be quite like old times. I haven't seen the dreary old rag for years."

2. "I was not thinking about the murder. Instead, he was smoking a cigarette and reading *The Times Literary Supplement* - nowadays vulgarly retitled *TLS*, without even a full stop after the 'S' - one of three special issues given over to modern Albanian poetry."

3. A short study of one of the Cavalier poets (Donna, Suckling, possibly Lovelace) commissioned by an inexperienced publisher for a series of

minor poets, was taxed with gross inaccuracy by a reviewer (its sole one in *The Times Literary Supplement*) but in language so immoderate that, on the whole, was able to laugh off the notice as a piece of academic pedantry.

Competition No 128

Winner: D. Haves
Answers:

1. I indeed I don't think it matters," she added, "how one looks behind."

"I should say it mattered more," said Gertrude. "Then you don't know who may be observing you. You are not out of your guard. You can't try to look pretty."

Charlotte received this declaration with extreme gravity. "I don't think one should ever try to look pretty," she rejoined, earnestly.

Henry James, *The Europeans*, chapter 2.

2. The tea-rose tea-gown, etc. Supplanted the mouseline of Cos. The pianola "replaces" Sappho's barbitos.

Esra, Pound, "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley", III.

3. One cry; and I stumble from bed, "cow-heavy and floral." In my Victorian nightgown. Your mouth opens clean as a cat's. The window, square

Whitens and swallows its dull star. And now you try Your handful of notes; The clear vowels rise like balloons. Sylvia Plath, "Morning Song".

TLS Children's books

Guiding young readers

Julia Briggs

BINO TAYLOR AND PETER BRAITHWAITE (Editors)

The Good Book Guide to Children's Books
Penguin, £2.95.
0 14 006756 6

Anxious parents, embarrassed by choice, often ask what books their children should read. With the field so large, a reliable guide to form is needed, advising us which or the stayers, what we can confidently put our money on. The self-proclaimed experts, however, as often as not, issue awful warnings instead of hot tips: don't let your children read "profane ballads, fond and amorous romances, fabulous histories"; young minds need to be fostered on the meat-and-two-veg of facts. The next generation is as likely as not to reverse such advice: the junk food of fiction turns out, after all, to feed the imagination, just as chocolate and peanuts prove, reassuringly, to contain iron and vitamin D. Yet Bulldog Drummond, Biggles and Enid Blyton may still be thought to rot the literary milk teeth. And what of those acknowledged poisoners of the

system, sexual stereotyping, racism, and what the Americans term "ageism" and "handicapism"? What of anything that encourages young people to elude the necessary nourishment of things-as-they-are? Bob Dixon in *New Read On* warns that "all evils come from human, not disembodied or supernatural sources", adding, more contentiously, that "to tell children otherwise is to tell them a massive and mind-crushing lie".

Young minds are not crippled that easily. The child who reads an externalized story of good and evil - whether *Beowulf* or *The Pilgrim's Progress* - is more likely to move on to George Eliot, Ralph Ellison or whatever, than the one never weaned from the telly and Space Invaders. And if that's a somewhat negative argument, isn't it possible that the difficulties of choosing meaningfully between right and wrong, of making sense of arbitrary adult rules, are so alarming and overwhelming at a particular stage of growing up that the child seeks a necessary relief in a world where all is clearly signposted, where dragons and orcs may be fought with physical strength, rather than invisibly tormenting their victims with queasy doubt and ineffectual pangs of guilt or embarrassment? It may also be that children's developing taste partly reflects the development of literature

itself, from its incantatory, heroic or folkloric beginnings, only gradually arriving at the fully voiced complexities and ironies of later forms. Certainly it is true of reading great novels at an early age that one finds primarily narrative satisfactions, rather than the deeper insights they later afford.

Penguin, in an attempt to answer those insistent parental questions, have brought out *The Good Book Guide to Children's Books*. This takes a short way with the professional Jeremiahs, affirming a positive and comprehensive view by including Emdin Blyden and Decker. Who alongside Alice, Kenneth Grahame and E. Nesbit, and manfully declaring that "the crowning glory of children's books is fantasy". Do we really need more second-rate imitations of Tolkien, LeGuin, Garner and Susan Cooper? Must dark towers and powers still be encouraged to rise, Arthurian, from Atlantis and Annwn, to engulf unwary readers in runes, rituals, ogam and the rest? Edwardian writers, too, among them Arthur Machen, Lord Dunsany and the Benbow brothers west in Celtic powers of evil, but are largely untried today. Despite their plea for fantasy, the editors of the *Good Book Guide* have not gone overboard for the form; indeed, enthusiasts will miss Googo

MacDonald, Walter de la Mare, T. H. White and, most of all, John Masfouf. The guide is short, too, on historical novels - no Gillian Avery, no Cynthia Harner, no Kipling, even. Presumably Geoffrey Willan's Nigel Melesworth, Anthony Buckridge's Jennings and Darbishire and Frank Richards's Billy Bunter are discarded as representing the unacceptable face of private education; they have been replaced by the superior moral hygiene (one must suppose) of *Grange Hill Rules* - OK.

It is, of course, only too easy to indulge in such complaints almost indefinitely. The value of the *Good Book Guide* lies precisely in its necessary selectivity - it lists around 500 books, covering all age groups and a very wide range of interests. By and large it has been capably and pleasantly assembled, with brief and sensible descriptions of the books recommended, together with colour reproductions of their covers. The whole is enlivened by Quentin Bleke's irresistibly comic drawings of readers and dogs (though I found his Look-Me-Up Chart quite incomprehensible). At one end, a substantial effort is made to provide a summary with approximate prices, of the types of book a child's collection should include, and this is backed up by lists of bookshops,

explanations of how books can be ordered, and even an order form.

The editors' line, given the various sects and dogmas to be encountered in the field, is prudently laudatory, but one inevitable consequence is that at times it achieves a rather flaccid compromise between the popular and commercial, and books of real literary distinction. Revealingly, the figure to emerge as truly representative of this middle way is Rosalind Dahl, who gets five separate mentions, more than any other author. The tone of the introduction is a little reminiscent of the absurd didacticism to be found in sex manuals, the emphasis firmly placed on the "delectable" rather than the "utile". "Pleasure from books is the aim"; "You will discover quite early on that children's books can have a charm and depth that onchans you as well as the children. This is as it should be..." The idealism of sex manuals, too. This doesn't at all accord with my memories of reading the collected works of the Reverend W. Awdrey (mercifully not listed here) for the umpteenth time. At this point let us celebrate the wonderful moment when children can finally read all their impossible favourites to themselves, even if these are, on the whole, rightly beneath the notice of the *Bien-pensant Good Book Guide*.

The continuing plight of the Theatre Museum

Julie Hankey

The theatrical and theatre academic world has been dismayed by the decision of Lord Gowrie, Minister for the Arts, to shelve the Theatre Museum, even if it is only for the time being. The regrets and assurances coming out of the minister's office sound too familiar: there have been, after all, eleven years of them - ever since 1971 when the government first agreed to the scheme in principle, until last year, when, after much public agitation, it agreed in practice. And the decision is all the more dismaying since last year's battle was fought on first principles, the whole idea having been dismissed as an indefensible luxury by the Rayner report (see *TLS*, July 23, 1982). The decision to go ahead in the face of that recommendation felt like a particularly special reaffirmation. The necessary money, about £1,000,000, was put into the Arts budget for the current year and the lease on the site of the old Flower Market, Covent Garden - a lease which included a contract for £900,000 worth of building work - was to have been signed with the GLC on July 7.

Two hours before that moment the Chancellor announced the government's spending cuts, among which were £4,000,000 to be found by the Arts Minister, and within that space of time the Theatre Museum found itself back in limbo. Lord Gowrie stresses those two hours. It was an agonizing decision, he says, but it had to be made speedily. Nearly £1,000,000 was about to be spent irrevocably on something which was as yet notional. Should he allow the thing to go ahead and thus leave the whole of the £4,000,000 to be borne by projects already in progress? Surely not. The logic of the situation demanded that he halt the Theatre Museum. And since time was of the essence he did so there and then.

It is a curious glimpse of ministerial practice. Is this how such things are done? Surely the GLC could be expected - given the consequences to itself - to allow the minister a week or two, not to insist on the actual day and hour written down in its diary

After all, according to Paul Channon, the Minister for the Arts in the last government, work on the site was due to have started in May of this year. The less had already been delayed three months. £4,000,000 worth of cuts takes up a lot of time. The priorities must be balanced, the least devastating options searched out, ways round discovered. The minister might even be expected to fight his corner against the cuts. Anyone outside the Treasury would understand. The GLC itself might have eased the problem, if it had been approached, and have been amenable to some relaxation in the method of payment, so as to avoid the instant commitments of £900,000. But it wasn't approached until after the event. Perhaps, after all, there wasn't much of a problem for the minister, but rather an opportunity: a handy million all in one go. At any rate, it is odd to find as Arts Minister so eager to accommodate the Treasury, and to know how the connection that Lord Gowrie has besides being the Arts Minister, also the Treasury spokesman in the House of Lords.

The other point in Gowrie's argument - that there was a project that had not, at least, been started - is true in only a very superficial sense. In fact the Theatre Museum exists. It is in operation and has been accumulating archives and collections for the last thirty years and more, all on the implicit, and sometimes the explicit understanding that it would eventually house them properly and make them available to the public. This it cannot do in the few rooms made available to it by the Victoria and Albert Museum. Most of its holdings are in store. To delay the proper facilities for exhibition and research is as much an interruption of current efforts as it is to delay, say, a theatre production in mid-rehearsal or a film before it has reached the cutting room. Collections and libraries, without a public and without scholars are pathetically still-born.

Lord Gowrie insists that he cares as much as anybody about the fate of the Theatre Museum, that he has inherited a commitment, and that, owing to further financial stringencies (not incidentally, impossible to imagine), the scheme will be a priority in the next financial year. This attitude is to be

applauded and encouraged. Norman St John Stevas gave it a boost when his all-party delegation to the minister came away with the assurance that the possibility of making some money available before the next fiscal year would be considered. It is crucial in this thing should not languish. It will always be possible to argue, however speciously, for the work to be put off because it hasn't started. One wall would make all the difference. And after all, what are the sums involved? They are minuscule compared with total government expenditure. £1,000,000 against £120,000,000,000 according to St John Stevas, and it is a million which could well be wiped out anyway. In the course of a year, by inflation and the job of recosting the whole project. Furthermore, the GLC has indicated that it cannot keep the Flower Market empty indefinitely. £2,500,000 have already been spent on the plans and drawings and other professional fees related to that particular site. Any long delay in the interest of economy could mean that that money will have been wasted. It may turn out that the Treasury will be better served by going ahead sooner rather than later.

The quarterly *Theatre Ireland* has recently produced its third issue. A letter of protest from a reader in New Zealand concerning initial broad-mindedness - "while articles on theatre in China or Poland may be interesting in themselves, I think readers may be more concerned with what is happening in Irish theatre" - seems to have prompted some resignation on the part of the editors: there is an evaluation of Michael Bogdanov's modern-dress *Hamlet* at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, and a retrospective look by Paddy Devlin at the banning for political reasons of Sam Thompson's *Over the Bridge* in the 1950s, plus shorter pieces on alternative and community theatres in Ireland. Thirty names are listed on *Theatre Ireland's* masthead; between its Editorial Panel and Board, but among them they seem unable to agree on what style to use for titles, proper names, etc. since the use of italics and bold type varies from page to page. Subscriptions cost £5 (yearly) and £3 (IR) and are available from 172 Upper Newmarket Road, Dublin.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 132" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on August 19.

1. "Have something to amuse you meanwhile" - *The Times Literary Supplement*. The boy must have delivered it by mistake.

"As a matter of fact I ordered it," said Godfrey. "I hope you don't mind."

"Mind? Of course not, so long as you don't want to read me any of it aloud. It will be quite like old times. I haven't seen the dreary old rag for years."

2. "I was not thinking about the murder. Instead, he was smoking a cigarette and reading *The Times Literary Supplement* - nowadays vulgarly retitled *TLS*, without even a full stop after the 'S' - one of three special issues given over to modern Albanian poetry."

3. A short study of one of the Cavalier poets (Donna, Suckling, possibly Lovelace) commissioned by an inexperienced publisher for a series of

Not quite the real thing

Gillian Avery

ROBERT BATOR (Editor)

Synopsis to Criticism of Children's Literature
Chicago: American Library Association, £27.95.
0 8389 0372 X

"Children", says Clifton Padman in the essay that opens *Synopsis to Criticism of Children's Literature*, "are proof against literary fads, literary gossip, and especially literary criticism." This of course is the main reason why there is such uncertainty about how to approach it. Criticism is written by adults for adults, and the child reader, it has to be said, generally prefers the books that do not attract the sort of attention. Should critics treat children's books as adult novels

manipulated, or as something altogether inferior for which they have to make allowances? Should they write from the point of view of the precursor, the moralist, or the parent? Or the child who fancies they once were? Do the books for books to please or to teach? Do they impose adult canons of good taste? And does it matter anyway when

the demands made by the child are mostly that its reading should be exciting and/or funny?

Robert Bator, editing these essays and reviews from Chicago, has selected some fifty pieces, English and American. His introduction outlines the difficulty of the task. "Despite the considerable heritage of literature for children and the many books about that literature", he comments, "the criticism of books for children remains in the scaffolding stage", and this in spite of the sound foundations laid by Mrs Trimmer (writing as a preceptor and a moralist) in the *Guardian of Education* as long ago as the beginning of the last century. Before moving on to the second part of his symposium, particular territories - picture books, poetry, fiction, fantasy - he tries to establish first what children's literature is, and then what form criticism of the genre should take.


In his introduction to this section he quotes the author who has a pretty good idea of what children's literature being can feel - children, idiots, the senile; they are such pleasures that do not require any power of discrimination. "For surely we do not speak of children or the mentally deficient as experiencing art." Though there would be few academics who would express

themselves quite so crudely, this is in fact the sort of sentiment that those of us who write for children anticipate from those who do not. Susan Cooper confessed to being relieved to discover that there were even some people who thought "that the writing of books published for children didn't necessarily mean that one was either a little old lady in tennis shoes or retarded". Children's authors are nearly always on the defensive when discussing their work, and over that they write not for children but for themselves; or alternatively that there is no difference in style or content between their books for children and for adults, even when it can be proved otherwise.

But there is a difference, and it is not just a matter of omitting abstractions, chopping long sentences and avoiding certain topics. It is a matter of presentation, a feeling that there should ultimately be a mood of optimism; so that if there is an unhappy ending, good must somehow come out of it. When Marjorie Rawlings's yearling deer is killed, for example, the father responsible for its death and the boy whose companion it was are drawn closer together; when a child dies in *Bridge to Terabithia* her friend finds a substitute in a little sister. To an adult

it may seem contrived and false, and the best books (using "best" in the literary sense) are those that avoid a situation demanding a palliative device such as these. The desire for liberty to be pessimistic is one factor that drives the children's author to adult fiction, together with a desire for release from the necessity of filtering all reactions through the net of a child's experience.

Synopsis of course can provide no clear-cut answers to the questions that are debated, but it is perhaps a better starting point for future discussion than we have ever been given before. There is some spirited sparring to enjoy: Mrs Trimmer donouncing *Primrose Pretty Face*; Susan Cooper telling the Children's Literature Association what she thinks of critics; and Lois Kuznetz's irritated rejoinder; Ethel Heins and Lillian Gerhardt at it hammer and tongs over the question of the relation of children's literature to contemporary adult fiction. There is also Catherine Storr discussing the nature of fairy stories, Geoffrey Trease on the problems of the historical storyteller, among many other contributions. The sections are linked and given continuity by an exceptionally wise and lucid commentary from the editor. It is a most stimulating collection.



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Absorbing details: picture books 1

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Age 9-13 £1.25

Traditional forms: picture books 2

Tanya Harrod

If recent publications are anything to go by, not all the classic fairy tales work well in picture-book form. Some of the most famous, for example *Hansel and Gretel*, *Snow White* and *Tom Thumb*, deal with terrible themes which in their pure forms are full of vivid imagery which an older child would turn into pictures in his or her own mind. The description "retold and illustrated by" invariably means that the text has been diminished to make room for pictures and simplified to suit a younger audience.

Lidia Postma's *Tom Thumb* exemplifies the problem. The horrifying story has been rewritten in simple language around delicate scary drawings. Perhaps we should be grateful to be spared passages like this one from the first English translation of Perrault's tale:

The ogre had seven daughters, all little children, and these little Ogresses had all of them very fine complexions, because they used to eat fresh meat like their father; but they had little grey eyes and entirely round, hooked noses, very large mouths, and very long sharp teeth, standing at a pretty distance from each other. They were not yet very wicked, but they promised it very much, for they had already bitten several little children, that they might suck their blood.

But in this version the detail has been dulled and the tiny heroic central character made less interesting. This seems to be a mistake, for a plain tale of evil is less palatable than a fanciful one.

The text of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Ugly Duckling* also loses some memorable passages. For example, it seems sad to omit those

storks "who walked on their long red legs talking Egyptian" from the lovely opening paragraph of the story. *The Ugly Duckling* is copiously illustrated by Monika Laimguber in her idiosyncratic, and somewhat unpleasant, stippled style and as a result the text looks cramped and crowded. She has also illustrated Gina Ruck-Pauquet's *The Singing Elephant* but here her rich colours and speckly treatment come into their own and transform a somewhat feeble tale. *The Sugar Prince* is another reworking. Fiona Moody employs the broadest of modern tones and the stylized illustrations make clever use of her fairly limited skills. None the less there is undoubted vigour in the Princess's awful port remarks and in the busy obsessive-looking drawings.

The Grimm Brothers' *The Frog Prince* is a story that can be appreciated on many levels and combined with Jutta Ash's illustrations should please a wide age range. Each page of text is framed by a little sketched vignette. The colour plates are particularly lovely: palely beautiful visions of the sparkle of jewellery and lace, the gleam of fountains and the oozing dewiness of the ubiquitous frog. Jutta Ash has gone some way to achieving that picture book ideal, the perfect marriage of text and illustrations. The same can be said of Lorinda Byron Cauley's treatment of the simple folk tale *The Cock, the Mouse and the Little Red Hen*. She crams each page with framed pictures illustrating every incident in this simple story of a fox outwitted by a resolute and hard-working little fowl.

Fairy stories do not lack moral lessons which are complicated and obscure. Hans Christian Andersen's stories tend, however, to be both rational and Christian. In *Red Shoes* he finds him at his most severe. The punishment for a young girl's vanity and lightheartedness is terribly vengeful but none the less it is a strange and wonderful tale. Chihiro Iwasaki has

illustrated *The Red Shoes* with watercolours of the most rain-washed delicacy. It will obviously be read by an older child but even so the drawings might seem a good deal too artful and attenuated.

Three recent picture books are outstanding and perhaps it is significant that none is a well-known fairy tale. The loveliest is Susan Cooper's adaptation of the Welsh tale *The Silver Cow*. The story is a good one, a variant on the Goose that lays the Golden Egg: an enchanted cow emerges from a lake and because of her and her progeny's abundant milk makes a poor farmer into a wealthy man. But his cruelty and greed ensure that his riches are taken from him. Warwick Hutton's watercolours are striking. They capture to perfection the subtle shifts of light in the Welsh hills but contain enough sharp drawing to retain a child's interest. *Two Donkeys and a Bridge* by Ralph Steadman could hardly be more different. It is described on the back cover as "a timely and wry fable" which makes it sound as if it belongs to that

dreary genre the adult fairy tale. The theme is certainly a timely one. Steadman explains at donkey and small boy level how wars begin but he does so in a robust and exciting way without any hint of wryness. The illustrations are of course splendid: Steadman at his most spirited and childlike.

Joanna Troughton's *The Wizard Puckin* is a beautifully designed book. India is a rich source for fairy

stories that have a Homeric simplicity about them, as opposed to the wicked stepmother and dark wood preoccupations of German folk tales. This account of a brave prince who rescues his seven brothers and a lovely princess from the evil Puckin is no exception. The illustrations and endpapers, which draw on Indian Mogul art, are perfectly integrated with a thrilling story.

LIJIA POSTMA: *Tom Thumb*. Hutchinson. £4.50. 0 09 150510 0.
HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN: *The Ugly Duckling*. Illustrated by Monika Laimguber. Hamish Hamilton. £4.75. 0 241 10836 5.
GINA RUCK-PAUQUET: *The Singing Elephant*. Illustrated by Monika Laimguber. Hodder and Stoughton. £4.95. 0 340 28610 5.
FIONA MOODY: *The Sugar Prince*. Hutchinson. £4.95. 0 09 150520 8.
THE GRIMM BROTHERS: *The Frog Prince*. Illustrated by Jutta Ash. Andersen Press. £3.99. 0 86264 020 2.
LORINDA BYRON CAULEY: *The Cock,*

the Mouse and the Little Red Hen. Pepper Press. £3.95. 0 237 45667 2.
HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN: *The Red Shoes*. Illustrated by Chihiro Iwasaki. Neugebauer Press. A. & C. Black. £4.50. 0 907234 267.
SUSAN COOPER: *The Silver Cow*. Illustrated by Warwick Hutton. Chatto and Windus: The Hogarth Press. £4.95. 0 7011 2672 8.
RALPH STEADMAN: *Two Donkeys and a Bridge*. Andersen Press. £4.50. 0 86264 045 8.
JOANNA TROUGHTON: *The Wizard Puckin*. Blackie. £4.95. 0 216 91266 0.

The parents' choice

Blake Morrison

Who are the real consumers of children's books - children or adults? The countless conferences, monographs and articles on the subject suggest that the answer, as we'd expect, must be children. "Good" children's books are those that in some way further a child's development (teaching words and concepts, broadening the imagination or simply entertaining). "Bad" children's books are those that don't; adults do not enter into it all. The reality, though, seems a long way from this pious convention. Until children are of an age to buy or borrow books for themselves, parents have to determine their reading for them; and until children have learnt to read fluently, parents will be at their elbow, nudging them onwards and trying to bring the text to life. This can be an onerous and repetitive process, made tolerable to parents, who'd probably rather be spending their reading time on the new Iris Murdoch or Timothy Mo, only if there is something in a children's book that they can themselves enjoy. Here, perhaps, is a more honest definition of what we mean by a "good" children's book - a text which adults, too, can put up with.

Parental involvement in their children's reading is at its greatest, of course, in the pre-school years. And the fact that parents spend at least as many hours talking through pre-school books as do their offspring is surely one reason for the popularity of Helen Oxenbury. Her brightly coloured board books - with their exhausted, grumpy faces, surprisingly youthful faces and mischievous toddlers - are as standard a part of the middle-class home as Penelope Leach and Elsie Price toys: much of her attraction is that, like Posh Simmonds, she depicts children in a refreshingly un-sentimental light. Now that she has acquired language and paper pages, however, much of her old power has been lost: if the board books were like silent movies, full of narrative subtleties, her three new books are *Carry On* comedies, slapstick rather than satirical, patronizing rather than irreverent.

In *Eating Out* mum's too tired to cook so dad offers to take her out to supper - with their toddler in tow. The restaurant is "stuffy" - so we conclude, as the waiter and the mother and her two newly turned out children on the adjacent tables - there are some redeeming. Zola'sque - (wondering concerning the lavatories situated round the back of the kitchen before we proceed to the inevitable and disappointing disappointment a crawling toddler, a tripped-up waiter, a tipped-over plate of spaghetti, and retirement of the family trio in disgrace ("Never again!" said mum)). Similar humilis follows in *The Birthday Party*, where the three-year-old heroine proves herself to hand over her present to John, and in *The Dancing Class*

where outside tights and loosely tied ballet shoes cause a group tumble. Reading her new series, one realizes that Oxenbury's appeal has probably always been more to parents than to children: her weezy protagonists tend to be rude, dishevelled and disruptive - good for parental laughs but not for toddler self-esteem. What is new, or more marked, is the exclusively middle-middle-class milieu.

Binette Schroeder's series of Zebby board books was among the most sinister of recent years: dark and lurid colours; surrealist landscapes, marauding hoods and deep gorges. Her new *Tuffa* series has become more domestic, its central character a small black dog. But many of the same props are there (that mauve sun, those black high-heeled shoes, those friendly little blue and plik birds) and the atmosphere remains Grimm and Gothic. Compared to the colourful products of Schroeder's imagination, most board books look drably utilitarian. But her appeal to small children remains questionable - they lack the richness of detail and the narratives can seem empty or inconclusive.

The strength of the *Find It* board books is Stephen Cartwright's drawing. The six creatures which it is the child's task to discover (a puppy, duck, piglet, bird, kitten and teddy) are appealing without being twee, and the objects behind which they part-conceal themselves, whether simple (a wheelbarrow) or complex (a bridge containing eggs, tomato, trifle, milk, lettuce, cucumber and so on), are lucidly illustrated. It's hard to imagine anyone wanting all six books in the series, since there's a limit to the question-and-answer process involved ("Can you see the kitten?", "What's that it's hiding behind?", "Where do you keep your own one of those?"). But more than one of them should be sampled, for they vary in difficulty.

Emanuel Schonogut's series uses the motif of a kitten to introduce a number of simple words - about eight to ten per book. Or, rather, that's the avowed intention: in fact, it seems a book for cat-buffs not toddlers, its imagination more engaged in the delineation of feline charm (all those green eyes, which small children do enjoy).

HELEN OXENBURY: *Eating Out*. 0 7445 0037 0. *The Birthday Party*. 0 7445 0035 4. *The Dancing Class*. 0 7445 0036 2. Walker Books. First Pictures Books. £2.95 each.

BINETTE SCHROEDER: *Tuffa and the Bone*. 0 7445 0061 3. *Tuffa and Her Friends*. 0 7445 0065 6. *Tuffa and the Picnic*. 0 7445 0062 1. *Tuffa and the Snow*. 0 7445 0064 8. *Tuffa and the Duck*. 0 7445 0063 X. Walker Books. £1.50 each.

STEPHEN CARTWRIGHT and CLAUDE ZEP: *Find the Duck*. 0 86020 714 5. *Find the Piglet*. 0 86020 716 1. *Find the Bird*. 0 86020 719 6. *Find the Puppy*. 0 86020 717 3. *Find the Teddy*. 0 86020 715 3. Each.

arched backs, little jumps and leaps) than by thought for language development. *Wake Kitten*, for example, teaches a child the words *waking, washing, eating, chasing, pouncing, hiding and sleeping*: it's not hard to spot the cat-buff's word smuggled in among words that make up a part of the child's daily life. Similarly, in *Hush Kitten*, a study in onomatopoeia, there's something peculiarly random in the choice of basic noise-words: *crackle, pop, crack, rip and minnow* are perhaps unexceptionable, but why *plash-splash* as against the simpler *splash* and why the esoteric *pink-plonk* (a cat walking along a piano)? Perhaps this series is a translation from another language, which explains the linguistic oddities. We don't know, for one of the conventions of books for small children is that their authors, unlike the rest of the writing profession, are denied biographical jacket notes. Whatever the case here, Schonogut's books don't seem especially well illustrated or thought out.

The Zohra "Time to Talk" books, on the other hand, have been very carefully thought out. Indeed, as you'd expect given that, as the publishers acknowledge, they "have been produced with the help of the Pre-school Playgroups Association and with advice from parents, teachers and children". The drawings are not especially original: David Bennett's chief influence seems to have come from comics, but his children could do with more of the individuality of comic book characters. The illustrations are nonetheless lucid and detailed, and have the rare ability to offer something that could reasonably interest a five-year-old and a two-year-old at the same time. This seems to be one of the principles of the prose, too: some pages have large simple pictures and only a few words; others have a series of smaller pictures; some have quite demanding questions and answers and complex sentences. The strength of the books is that they could be read three times in one day yet lead to different discussion each time. Authors and publishers of board books could learn a good deal from them - why can't board books have this kind of detail, which small children do enjoy?

EMANUEL SCHONOGUT: *Find the Kitten*. 0 86020 718 8. Unhorn £1 each.

EMANUEL SCHONOGUT: *Hush Kitten*. 0 7445 0033 8. *Wake Kitten*. 0 7445 0032 X. *Play Kitten*. 0 7445 0034 6. *Catch Kitten*. 0 7445 0030 3. *Look Kitten*. 0 7445 0031 1. Walker Books. £1.25 each.

SIR TARKY: *Shopping*. 0 7445 0012 5. **DAVID LLOYD:** *Bath Time*. 0 7445 0010 9. **WENDY BOASE:** *Meal Time*. 0 7445 0011 7. **SUE TARKY:** *Playing*. 0 7445 0013 3. Illustrated by David Bennett. Walker Books. Time to Talk. £1 each.

Attractiveness is not enough: picture books 3

Sarah Wintle

Good books for small children need to achieve just the right combination of the familiar with the unfamiliar. The most positive response is usually compounded of recognition and surprise, and this is just as true of pictures as it is of text. Sheer attractiveness is not enough; children, up to a startlingly late age, are unimpressed by views and vistas; they would much rather examine the old cigarette stubs, elastic bands discarded by the gourmet or dead leaves that lie right under their feet.

Granted the cigarette-stub effect, the first of these books and the one most obviously aimed at a very young audience, the Japanese *I Can Build a House*, is a little too panoramic. The pictures of the teddy-bear protagonist are charming, and the bear's first attempts to build, first out of pastel coloured bricks and then out of cushions in sophisticated shades of browns and creams have pleasingly disastrous outcomes. But the pictures are a little short of the kind of painful detail which children savour. The final attempt at construction demands scissors, sellotape, a large box and parental co-operation.

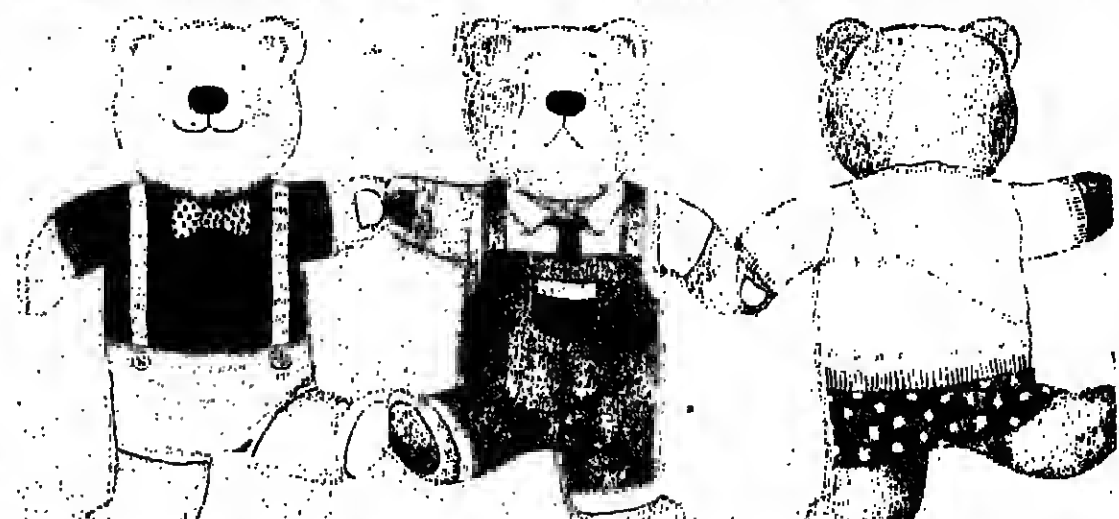
If You Take a Pajamas text covers a wider range, although the text remains minimal. There is no narrative, just a series of pictures with captions on the theme of colour. Yet the pictures do neatly involve the same people and the characteristic visual style prompts the making of connections between pictures: the building up of a composite notion of the interior of a house for example. Each illustration has a rather charming enigmatic air and is full of circumstantial detail. The interiors are intriguing: full of books, plates of biscuits, odd pottery pitchers and jars arranged in crowded shelves, and children are intensely busy at not

quite definable tasks. These pictures can be endlessly read with pleasure.

The remaining books make more of words. The rather dispiriting *Brown Bear in a Brown Chair* has a story and rather brown illustrations. Brown bears who sit in brown chairs get squashed and so this one demands clothes, gets a garment a page, thinks he looks silly and returns to his original state. The chair is re-covered, but alas, the bear's dress is made out of the

Awful suffers from the very poor quality of the reproduction of its pictures. The alligator, rude, obnoxious and generally destructive, substitutes for hurtful parents - he doesn't listen to what you say; for resentful siblings and contemporaries - he busts up your trike; and for the adult world generally - he barges ahead in bus queues. Again the text rather lacks rhythm, and the illustrations show on

hammock, leaving their disconsolate daughter right out of it. Esmé makes a series of wishes for a friend, each illustrated by a wish-fulfilment bubble picture of life with an animal companion, and is finally rewarded by the birth of a sibling (The canoeing has paid off). The last picture shows Esmé, looking distinctly fed-up, two nappy pins stuck into her Laura Ashley smock, and holding a manically grinning baby. Beastly old life is at its



Three unmistakably Ahlbergian teddy bears, from *Ready Teddy* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg (Heinemann, 99p. 0 434 92505 3), one of a new series of cut-out figures called "Daisywhims". Daisywhims, have six figures which unfold to tell a story in rhyme; others in the series depict babies, witches and snowmen.

same material, and we are back with a potentially squashed bear. His owner promises to love and protect him in an unconvincing last page turn-about. Such a low-key story needs to be more amusingly illustrated and more exactly paced and varied if it is to sparkle.

The two books of American origin aim fairly obviously at articulating for the child possibly unacceptable or inadmissible feelings about the world and its inhabitants. *Alligators are*

odd sort of hill-billy place that doesn't quite support its own fantasy.

Poor Esmé portrays a more specific picture of a child's predicament and is more fun. Its somewhat Sendak-like illustrations are gravely funny about the frustrations of being a child in a sophisticated adult world, with no one to play with. Esmé's child neighbours are uniformly awful and her Mum and Dad were always going to parties, that is when they are not canoeing in a

tricks again, and children should enjoy the joke.

Wolves are such tremendously popular villains with smallish children that it would be hard for any telling of *The Three Little Pigs* to fail. Tony Ross offers the tough version - two of the little pigs are eaten because they are not "smart" enough. The narrative plays games with pastoral-urban themes; the pigs set out from a high-rise block and after the wolf has ended

up in the soup, the country quickly becomes overcrowded with more urban seekers of rural solitude. Such jokes are likely to pass over the heads of most four-year-old wolf fans, but the hyperactive illustrations have some nice touches, as when the wolf's huffing and puffing blows away the entire contents of the house of sticks including the television. The combination of traditional folk tale and *Beano*-like narration and illustration is pretty brash, but this book aims at a wider readership than *Poor Esmé*.

Comic style illustrations and a generally down-market feel characterize *Lucky: the story of a Puppy*, and neither works to its advantage. The pictures are glaringly ugly and the story panders to the least constructive and most narcissistic side of a child's imagination. Kate gets a puppy, but her father (she doesn't appear to have a mother) will not feed it and viciously turns it out into the snow for eating his slipper and piddling on the carpet. The puppy spends a miserable night, is knocked down by a car, rescued and finally adopted by David whose parents are perfect. The combination of violence and sentimental morality is quite nasty.

SINCE, WATANABE: *I Can Build a House*. Illustrated by Yasuo Ohtomo. Bodley Head. £3.95. 0 370 30965 0.

PULVIO TESTA: *If You Take a Pajamas*. Andersen. £3.95. 0 86264 0377 7.

IRINA HALE: *Brown Bear in a Brown Chair*. Macmillan. £4.95. 0 333 34852 4.

DAVID MCPHAIL: *Alligators are Awful*. Kaye & Ward. £3.95. 0 7182 3930 X.

VICTORIA CHES: *Poor Esmé*. Oxford University Press. £4.50. 0 19 279781 6.

TONY ROSS: *The Three Pigs*. Andersen. £3.95. 0 86264 039 3.

NIELL McMULLEN: *Lucky*. Heinemann. £4.95. 0 434 95136 6.

Little shockers

Candida Lycett Green

ROALD DAHL: *Dirty Beasts*. Illustrated by Rosemary Fawcett. Cape. £4.95. 0 24 02053 6.

A hundred years after Edward Lear's nonsense songs and Hilary Belloc's *Cautionary Tales*, Roald Dahl is still providing the footnotes and the shock horror treatment that children will all love. Though Dahl's verse is less refined than Belloc's and less elegant than Lear's, it is music to children's ears: particularly such lines as:

I am for home. I'm bored. "Mum! I should be in bed!"

Dirty Beasts is Dahl's thirteenth book for children, a sequel to his

These particular tales are reminiscent of Dahl's first collection of grown-up short stories, *Kiss Kiss*, which was first published in 1960. One of the stories there concerns a vegetarian who, on his first taste of pork, becomes obsessed with pigs and ends up being swept onto a conveyor belt in a pig processing factory. The same macabre twist appears in *Dirty Beasts*. For example when a "learned pig" discovers that the side of bacon he has been the farmer to the floor and eats him, declaring:

"I had a fairly powerful hunch that he might have me for his lunch. And so because I feared the worst I thought I'd better eat him first."

Perhaps the best of the nine tales in this book is "The Ant-Eater". A terrified spotted American boy called Roy demands to be given an ant-eater. His father searches far and wide and finally locates one in India, from whence it is shipped to the United

States. It arrives all skin and bones and asks Roy for food, but the little boy says, "Go find an ant." As you've probably guessed, Americans, "How ever hard they try they can't pronounce a simple word like 'ant'." So, not unnaturally, the ravenous ant-eater, on being introduced to Roy's "Ant-Dorothy", devours her and on discovering Roy hiding behind a pile of manure says, "You little squirt! I think I'll have you for dessert."

Everyone gets their just desserts in *Dirty Beasts* and Rosemary Fawcett's vividly coloured and splendidly shocking pictures emphasize this. Horror-struck children with bulging eyes hang on to their equally terrified teddies while greedy Frenchmen brandish carving knives. Rosemary Fawcett's style is a mixture of Beryl Cook and KJ Williams, but the nastiness of her pictures is exceptional as is, incidentally, her ability to paint lupins.

Spot's Birthday Party by Eric Hill (Heinemann. £4.50. 0 434 94287 1) follows the best-selling *Where's Spot and Spot's First Walk* without quite achieving the calculated obviousness which made the earlier books such a success. This time it is Spot's birthday and during a game of hide and seek the now-familiar crocodile, bear, snake and monkey are discovered in cupboards, under carpets and behind curtains. They all have a smart remark for Spot (the snake says "Oh, hi"), but there is a certain lameness in the supposedly triumphant ending, with Spot being given his presents and simply saying "Thank you". Eric Hill's style seems to have become coarser, his colours are harsher and the subject entails an awkward anthropomorphism with Spot hiding his eyes and opening parcels. These are the sort of criticisms that are bound to be levelled at a follow-up to an established classic, but *Spot* is still lovable and the lift-the-flap formula has some life in it yet.

Across the Stream (by Mirra Ginsburg and Nancy Tafuri. Julia MacRae. £4.95. 0 86203 113 3) is a deceptively simple story aimed at the under-fives which is lifted above the ordinary by its minimal text and large fresh pictures. Mirra Ginsburg's words have enough drama in them to tell the tale of a hen and three chicks and their escape from a fox. They also have enough intrinsic interest to detain the reader over crisp rhymes ("The hen said 'Cluck, we are in luck', and intermittent croak-like rhythms ("The chick on a duckling, a chick on a duckling, a chick on a duckling, and the hen on a duck"). The design is striking: the words are printed in a large clear black-letter script a few words to a page. The pictures are large and fill the frame. The whole thing has a clean calm feel about it: it is the sort of book that will stand up very well to the reading and re-reading that this age group always demands. E.B.

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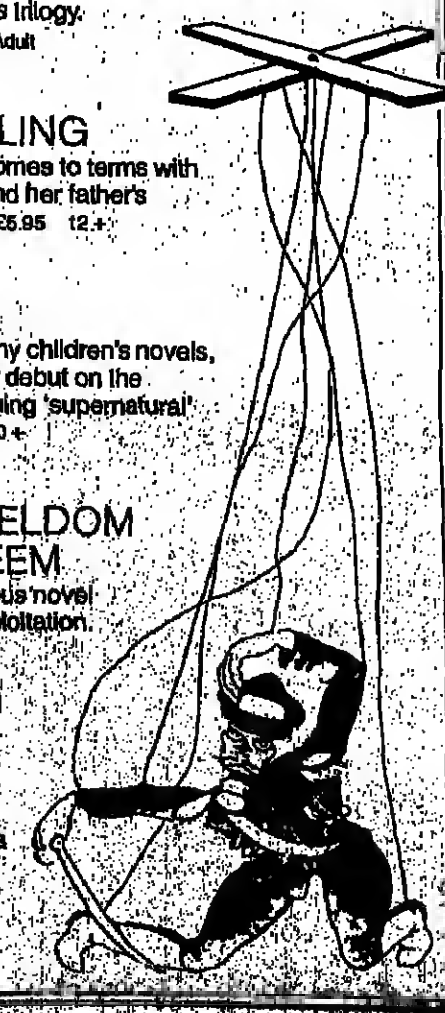
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METHUEN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Numbers as fun

Harvey Mellor

Many parents spend a great deal of time helping their children to learn to read, but much less time is spent helping them to use numbers. Children will be taught to count, of course, but what would we think of teaching a child the alphabet and leaving it at that? Parents see words as fun, they enjoy books and they try to share this enjoyment with their children, but I suspect they do not see numbers as fun.

The John Burningham books are part of a series called "Number Play". Readers familiar with his simple story books will recognize his affectionate and witty illustrations which depict clearly accessible situations for the very young. *Pigs plus* describes the journey of a pig in a deeply disadvantaged car. As the journey progresses, more and more bits drop off and a new pig comes to the assistance of the unfortunate driver. Each pig is a number added on. *Five down* is a counting exercise: each number is seen as an object in itself - a baby in a pram throws a huge number one to the ground (it cracks), to the evident satisfaction of the baby, five tiny mice struggle downstairs with their large yellow numeral (when it hits the ground to be broken into five pieces one can clearly detect embarrassed shufflings). *Ride off* is a story of five children who one by one fall from a horse. Count up shows various ways in which the numbers one to five can be divided up, for example three frogs skipping becomes two frogs holding a rope and one frog jumping.

The books are designed to be opened out and then unfolded, and this can turn out to be an exercise in patience, distracting from the enjoyment of the contents. The books are easily torn; there is a flap that holds the books closed, and eager fingers tend to tear the front covers in two. Despite this, the books are an enjoyable

introduction to numbers and their possibilities, suitable for three to four-year-olds.

Anno's Mysterious Multiplying Jar is about a jar containing an island, two countries, six mountains, twenty-four walled kingdoms and so on, ending with 3,628,800 jars all within the original jar. The illustrations are beautiful, full of fine and delicate detail. But there is little connection between them; for example one does not feel that there really are nine boxes in each of the eight cupboards.

The major section of the book can be seen as a counting book - it is followed by pages of dots painting out the implications of the simple ideas that have gone before, and then a discussion on large numbers and factorials. It is not clear who it is aimed at. Older children may be put off by the picture book style, but the full meaning of the sequence cannot be grasped until multiplication has been understood. It will probably be most useful to a child who is just beginning to learn about multiplication, for the book shows some of the ideas that lie behind multiplication, and gives a hint of where it leads.

JOHN BURNINGHAM: *Count up*, 0 7445 0046 X. *Read one*, 0 7445 0045 X. *Ride off*, 0 7445 0045 1. *Pigs plus*, 0 7445 0044 3. *Five down*, 0 7445 0042 7. *Just cats*, 0 7445 0041 9. WALKER BOOKS, £2.50 each. MITSUMASA AND MASACHISO ANNO: *Anno's Mysterious Multiplying Jar*, Bodley Head, £4.95. 0 370 30958 8.

Children's books of the year 82 has just been published by Julia MacRae Books in association with the National Book League (123pp, £4.50, 0 86203 121 4). The book is an annual annotated listing of titles chosen from the reference library of current children's books of the National Book League.

A boy-king

Mary Renault

NIKOS KAZANTZAKIS
Alexander the Great
Translated by Theodora Vasilis
Peter Owen, £8.95.
0 7306 0604 7

Few important figures of ancient Greece are easily, at all, accessible to children. Socrates impresses only by the fortitude of his inexplicable death; Pericles is dimly apprehended as the cause of Greek civilization. Xenophon needs his own narrative voice. On the whole one must stick to Herodotus; the others are for the second decade, not the first.

Alexander, however, is a gift. Only the extremes of prejudice or pedantry can make him boring. He is a spoonful of jam with which the medicine of history slips effortlessly down. His virtues and faults are nearly all within the scope of childhood. Brave, handsome, royal, generous, adventurous, beloved; kind to his horse and dog and, usually, to his friends; more chivalrous to his enemies than Coeur-de-Lion who made more fuss about it a corrective, even, to the notion that heroes don't waste time on books. And, at the end of his lifelong adventure story, age will not wither him nor the years condemn.

He has few dark corners with which to disillusion the teens. Sins done in anger, remorse, any child can understand, as he can the seductive pleasure of dressing up in exotic clothes and feeling important. The needed background is not boring either; nor is the grand design.

A children's book about Alexander, by no less a writer than Nikos Kazantzakis, first published two years after his monumental *Odyssey*, makes expectation soar. Originally serialized (we are not told in what), it is now printed unbridled. The translator says in her preface that, had Kazantzakis lived, he would doubtless have re-edited it. So, indeed, one may hope and believe, a disservice has been done him by releasing it now.

Alexander is seen at first from the viewpoint of a Macedonian boy, oddly named Stephan (there are other eccentric names) whom he befriends and who later joins his staff, fading most of the time into a passive observer. It is hard to account for the constant falsifications of simple history which pepper the book on nearly every page. They reflect no consistent bias;

they seem to symbolize nothing; they attempt no analysis, invariable or hostile, at the man; they neither fantasize nor debunk. The overall impression is of something done in tremendous haste, mainly at even wobbly from memory, without access to the sources or even a serious classical history. 1940 was a bad year for writers, in Greece as elsewhere; but the patbailers of giants should be accorded decent burial.

To select at random: how is history enhanced when Callisthenes, who was ostentatiously temperate, is portrayed as a boozing old sot? When the tough and capable Hephaestion, a mountain campaigner, seasoned diplomat, and hider of the Indus, appears as a doctored and - literally - clinging minion, whom Alexander thinks too delicate to take on the Maedean expedition? When that magnificent old satrap Artabazus is presented as a grotesque villain who plans to assassinate Alexander before his accession, and never appears in Asia? When Alexander wears silver Ammon horns in his hair, prefiguring the coinage of his successors? When he runs up the walls of Tyre on a scaling ladder and jumps down inside, diminishing that towering citadel to a mudbrick fort, and leaving the Mallian arrow as mere anticlimax? "In a few weeks Alexander had completely recovered?" When he, and his companions too, are said to have ridden fifteen days and nights without sleep? When he plans, instead of the Arabian expedition, the circumnavigation of Africa?

There are unaccountable omissions. Persepolis never burns. Parmenion vanishes without trace. Roxane never appears at all.

One cannot know if the writing has more texture in the original, or the dialogue more style. Ships, such as epigram for epiphany, occasionally give the adult reader pause, and will certainly bemuse the juvenile one.

Though it is a pity to start young readers off in such a general mist of error, it would matter less if, in the sum, the essential Alexander came through. But what emerges is an icon which barely survives into the nineteenth century. As a boy he is not simply a Wunderkind, as he may well have been; he is born complete, and undergoes virtually no development. At thirteen or so, seeming to take for granted the date of his own accession, he is already to conquer the world and bring to it the benefits of Hellenism; though this, as the tale proceeds, he is seldom seen to do. There is no considered strategy, no adaptation, no

The life of the book announces its acceptance by UNESCO as an educational work. One can only speculate on the work by which this accolade is bestowed.



One of Robin Jacques's drawings from *Kings and Queens by Herbert and Eleanor Furber* (Dent, £5.95, 0 460 06127 5).

hint that his Persian robe had any political significance. He is the more conqueror of hostile traditions, yet the point is never discussed that it would seem, perceived. One thinks all too often of Stephen Leacock's hero who "flung himself upon his horse and rode madly off in all directions". Five minutes after arriving anywhere, without consulting anyone or receiving any intelligence, he mounts Bucephalus, signals for the army to turn out on the spot, and is off to the next objective, often without disclosing it: "Let them grumble, it's enough that they obey." So back a misreading of Macedonian kingship and social structure, and of Alexander himself, is hard to excuse.

As the story begins, and the young Stephan is seen at home, there is a rather charming vignette of Greek village family life, opening vistas of another, unpretentious and better book. Even here, though, a little Macedonian girl goes off like Sparfan, to the gymnasium with the boys.

The life of the book announces its acceptance by UNESCO as an educational work. One can only speculate on the work by which this accolade is bestowed.

Writing down

Alan Brownjohn

YVONNE SCANNELL, GREGORY HARRISON and LAURENCE SMITH
Catch the Light
0 19 276050 5

ROY FULLER, BARBARA GILES and ADRIAN RUMBLE
Upright Downfall
0 19 276052 1
Oxford University Press, £4.50 each.

These two trios of poets arrive in attractive hardbacks offering a different image from some recent volumes of "popular" poetry for children: relatively staid, but with good clear typography, space on the pages, and no busy illustrations. It would be pleasant to say that they represent a successful reaction against the tendency to think that poetry for children should be less subtle, less technically skilled, less varied in theme and imaginative scope. Unfortunately this does not quite happen; and it is to be hoped that future volumes will offer more consistency, more substance and more originality.

Catch the Light takes its title from Lawrence Smith's opening poem, which is fey and Georgian indeed for the first page of a new series:

Do you call it spring again -
When adages start in bite
and blackbirds find a singing bough
and celandines catch light?

This ought to be within the experience of children, but expressed that way it is more in tune with children's experience of the dimmest old school anthologies. The children of "Birmingham", for example, ("No streams to dam / No daring hunt in a wooded wood") might not see it like that; they might even see romance in a whiffy junco. In any case the spread of nature ought to be more simply registered.

Smith's bird poems and his extended, ambitious "Gift of the Magi" will give them more to think and puzzle over; as will the work of Gregory Harrison. Harrison has a genuine talent for sparring the poetry in unlikely places: the sight of a squirrel up a telegraph pole, a parade of swans across a car park, a brush with a porcupine, the weird task of thawing a "Frozen Hose".

the plastic snake
Spirals, reaches,
Regurgitates its gold meal,
Tinkles out
its nest, glass cylinders.

Nostalgic evocation is his strong point, in poems about trotting-horses circling a field, or the sand-hale forbidden to his grandfather (who is fascinated by the turkey-house instead), or "Trams": "... on the upper deck, / Shunk in one water-caps / The two-humped shaps / Of man and girl, / Wha away and cling / To a wet, slatted seat." Ideas are sometimes slightly overplayed, but an engagingly sinister note in Harrison's imaginings give his poems the feel of something different and distinctive.

This cannot be said of Adrian Rumble's poems in *Upright Downfall*, hard as they strive for a novelty of subject-matter. Children themselves often write better than adults writing down to them, and would surely expect more thrills and fantasies from lunar travel than Rumble provides in "Burning Burning Moonward".

Gliding gliding moonward
dancing through a void
turning to the music
of star and asteroid.

These poems suggest that interstellar space has not engaged the writer's own imagination; and to have one's heart in the night place (in his best pieces, "I dreamed Earth was Dying" and "Starburst") is no substitute. Barbara Giles specializes in mildly surrealistic word-play ("Was an if upon a stair / met a whoo without a where") with a line in daff titles ("Fewery, Mosey, Sonery", "Upright Downfall"). The imagination here is a slim creature,

feeding an innuendo tradition of light verse ("Now you have a papsagat / da be sure to treat it right"), or an Graham and Bellow ("Mrs Morris, Whn Died at Being Clean").

As so often, the most experienced and talented poets in these books make the strongest impression, writing as well for children as they do for adults. This is not to say that Yvonne Scannell is an his best farm in *Catch the Light* (a long and rather sticky written ballad, "Wee Duncan and Red John", uses up a disproportionate amount of space), but that he writes anything which lacks technical assurance, intelligence and wit. "Dominees" is gently unnerving ("Old men in corners, / Caps, mufflers, glasses at mid; / Clicking of old bones"), and "Rhyme-Time", with its chimes and half-chimes will delight any reader who has begun to enjoy subtle sounds and verbal ingenuities.

Roy Fuller, in artfully infernal vein, dominates *Upright Downfall*, whether advising an "How to Boil an Egg (and Eat it) or recording his ambiguous relations with the cat Tompkins. He has the right touch for the bizarre matter of what is protruding from his sock: "Walking along, / My right big-toe seemed wrong, / When I took off my shoe / I saw a head peeping through." And his "Waiting for the Prince" is not only the best poem in either of these two books but shows Fuller at his most elegant and poignant:

in an awful mess
Slumbered the young Princess ...
Like a bag of bits at siring her hair;
Her nose not over clean, and bare.
Her grandfather, passing by,
Let out a plying sigh;

And put things in drawers and her to bed -
Because you never knew the said
Soon someone else who cares
May catch her unawares.

This is not strictly a "children's" poem, but neither are many of the most magical poems for children; a truth which seems to need to be re-learned all too often.

scholars tend to think the tales are about development problems - but in Cinderella's case, sibling rivalry - but that may be because they have been relegated to infant status by change of fashion. One fascinating essay here, by Margaret Mills, locates Cinderella very firmly in the context of a Muslim ritual of (adult) female solidarity, in which it is the way mothers, daughters and sisters all betray but forgive each other that turns out in the end to be critical.

However the main message of this collection is "armchair critics should at least review the literature"; and every facility is offered for that in future, with long bibliographies and masterly introductions by Dundes to each of the essays selected. It's true, too, that critics can learn something from folkloric method. Not many will be convinced by Dundes's own essay arguing that *King Lear*, viewed as a Cinderella variant, turns out to be an incestuous fantasy for a daughter (Cordelia, destined Lear). Still, Shakespeareans should have been more aware of indexes and studies of the "love-test" motif; and the "Thou shalt beadle" speech is indeed a classic account of the psychological contrivance of "projection", so deeply rooted in all the "Cinderella" tales - except perhaps Walt Disney's.

The conviction one ends up with, in fact, is that not much can be known about how fairy tales work, because they are so contextless. Modern

Or is it a solar myth, in which Cinderella is the dawn? She alternates between brilliance and eclipse, observed one easily; the first known version (Chaucer, ninth century) dresses her in blue and gold, according to another. When it comes to versions, the more than six hundred now discovered allow virtually free play to the would-be interpreter. "Beautiful Wessellia", in a Russian variant, is seduced by the cannibal witch Baba Yaga, who roars herself round in a mortar and pestle; signifying, according to the psychoanalyst, that the mother is devouring her child. Quite contrary: Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* by Elsie Lenoir Keyser, and "Little Girl" without their curls remain for sure, the death of the mother, by surely, the death of the mother, which leaves the little girl with only wild rivals to beat, is that too

articles on *Babar*: Jean de Brunhoff's *Advice to Youth: The Babar Books as Books of Courtesy*, by Ann M. Hildbrand and "The Reign of King Babar" by Harry C. Payne. There are essays on *Little House on the Prairie*, *Pinocchio*, *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, "Aspects of Pastoral in the Green Knowe Series" and "This Fresh Air: Kids, or Some Contemporary Versions of Pastoral". Among the books reviewed are *A Visit to William Blake's Inn* by Nancy Willard and books on the work of Edward Ardizzone and E. H. Shepherd. The book concludes with an article by Nancy Lewis on "The Road to Fantasy".

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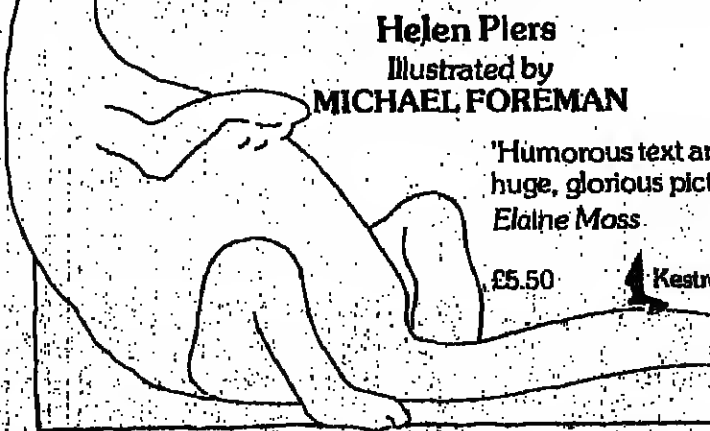
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MACMILLAN

Flying Carpets, £3.95 each.

Macmillan's new series, "Flying Carpets", declares that it "bridges the gap between first picture books and longer stories", but even those children who have learnt to read with picture books may find these attractive collections quite hard going at first. Though the format is closest to *World's Word's* "can read" books, *Flying Carpets* are actually a stage beyond such series as *Blackbirds* and *Gazelles*, and probably even more demanding than *Antelopes*, although each page is illustrated and paragraphs are brief.

there is not much effort in control vocabulary or sentence structure. The reader is expected to cope with this sort of thing: "The Kraken also liked a rather dotty sea-witch who roared about muttering spells which began with words like 'Sweety, sweety linkum-loo' and usually ended with someone being turned into a sea cucumber."

Eva Ibbotson's *The Worm and the Toffee-Nosed Princess* and other stories of *monsters* (from which the quotation comes) is great fun and full of splendidly moral tales which are also satisfyingly chilling. The generally applicable moral is "Serves her right", but it may be something less useful such as "Never try to kick a Boobee bird". The readers of these collections will need to have sufficient decoding skill in order not to be deterred by a large number of proper names which they are unlikely to have come across before, such as Nebuchendiaz, Brölcheo, Fuatt, etc. Indeed, although the stories in this series purport to be "either based on, or retellings of, folk and fairy tales", most of them are unfamiliar and some of them are purely the authors' own inventions. The fourth, in one of Eva Ibbotson's stories, is a rather wet sort of evil fairy who is always saying to her son, a spidery Brölcheo, "Why don't you do something with your life?" - a joke which might be appreciated more by adult readers of other years. In fact, the whole series might well work as well with adolescents as with the bright six-year-olds.

William Mayne's *A Small Pudding for Wee Gowrie* and other stories of *underground creatures* is likely to be particularly popular. William Mayne is both sorts of funny. He has always been able to adapt himself to the abilities of new readers. (*Witness* such small masterpieces as *The Big Wheel* and *The Little Wheel*, first published nearly twenty years ago.) And his contribution to this series, for all its oddity, is probably the easiest to read. There is a lot of casual rhyming which makes Mayne's always individual style sound even stranger than usual, especially when read aloud. "A path goes somewhere, always, or it would not be there. This one knew the rule, and led to the mouth of a cave."

Students of Bruno Bettelheim, who have studied "the uses of enchantment", may pause and consider the more disturbing implications of some of these stories, particularly in the tale of James Riordan's book. Most of us will simply accept that tale as a young child, who would be easily set to sleep by the "singing" induced by these "singing" tales. The stories in *Beyond the Firelight* and other stories of *monsters* are more familiar and more satisfying than the best ones in Mayne's Ibbotson's and Riordan's collections, but all four books are worth having. Macmillan's list has seemed to grow in size and television tie-ins, good to see them launching a new series.

The lessons of life: school stories

Sarah Hayes

A bookseller recently attributed the waning appeal of children's books to the "patronising series of fustian novels with frillies jackets and not a punk of a skirt in sight". She might have mentioned leg-warmers, too, which Jen Mark lovingly documents in this unsettling collection of short stories about and for teenagers. The four best stories are reprinted from anthologies, and it is a pleasure to have them gathered together with four new stories in one elegant volume decorated by Bert Kitchen's stunning precision drawings. "Wrinkly legwarmers that look like lagging on old water-pipes" are reproduced in tangible disarray, making the fingers itch to pull them up.

Jan Mark's everyday settings are loosely connected with institutions – a tennis tournament, a school stage, a train, a studio, a chapel. And in the best tradition of short stories, what happens in them is a change in emphasis; s shift in viewpoint rather than any major event. A boy overhears a stranger on a train describe his mother as a nagging bitch: she is, and he knows it, but now he can accept it. A stage-lighting freak who thinks Shakespeare is "an effie twit" changes his mind when the isolated world of his lighting cradle is invaded by a real person. A girl uses an answering machine to revenge herself on parents making a mess of their marriage.

Occasionally the adolescent has a

glimpse of adult vulnerability, which gives him the upper hand. He can be sympathetic, or hostile as in "Sut Life: Remote Control" on excruciating contest between the insufferable certainty of the art student, with youth and talent, and the tired experimentalism of his middle-aged teacher. As well as seeing into their minds, Jan Mark has listened to teenagers talking. What she has heard and reproduced is the jokey nature of adolescent communication: unless talking about the opposite sex, most articulate teenagers seem to communicate by way of silly vowels, bad (if agreeable) puns, and a sort of standard jokespeak derived from the Goons by way of Monty Python and followers.

There is no patronizing in *Feet* and, more surprisingly, no attempt at empathy. This is how you are, says Jan Mark, and I rather like it, but it's not me. *SUS* falls into the empathy trap. It attempts to get inside its teenagers, its policemen, its blacks, its middle-class, its working class, its rebels, and its do-gooders. And it's bound to fail. Fay Sampson argues (probably rightly) that children in urban areas can, through no fault of their own, become undesirable in the eyes of the law. The friendly hobby who gave you road safety lectures last year becomes the fascist pig who puts the boot in your head. The reason? You are sixteen and dressed like other sixteen-year-olds and you go about in groups. Fay Sampson has tried terribly hard to be fair on the police who are seen to run gym classes for young people, organize

discos, play flutes (well, a flute), and to be sensible and caring when not provoked; and she has made great efforts to be critical of naive dogooders. But there is no mistaking the author's certainty that innocent young people are manoeuvred into violence by a fearsome and brutal system of law enforcement. Message apart, *SUS* paints a colourful picture of a group of sixth-formers running an amateur rock group – a real-life study to judge from the dedication: "To the Amazing Rubber Band and friends without whose help I could have saved myself a lot of trouble".

The token girl in *SUS* is an unlikely dreamy creature who gets away with murder – most real girls would find her a bit of a wit. The eponymous heroine of *Alice's Part* is one of those introspective sombre girls so beloved of children's authors. This novel, aimed at older children rather than young adults, is another interesting but flawed piece. The action, which is nicely conceived and executed, takes place during the flooding of the Thames when Alice's grandmother is drowned. The plot jumps from one set of people and circumstances to another rather in the manner of Ed McBain: from Alice's friend's burglar father rescuing flood victims, to Alice's father searching the hospitals for his mother. If Alice herself played her part in the book as well as in the school play, she might tie up the disparate elements, but she remains a shadowy and not very sympathetic figure. The gathering flood, though, is splendid and thoroughly sinister.



A prize-winning entry in a competition for an architect-designed doll's house. The models will be on show of Sotheby's St George Street Gallery from August 8 to September 6.

Alice's headmistress is last seen showing her human face, vowing to worry less about standards and more about togetherness. Teachers are human beings, though parents and pupils alike have difficulty in recognizing this. One of the good things about the *Grange Hill* comprehensive school television series is that it presents a staff composed of nice and nasty ordinary people. Readers of the *Grange Hill* books (hugely popular with primary school children) can revel in the petty squabbles of the staffroom and the irreverent attitude of pupils and staff alike to the frosty headmistress who turns out a good story in the end. *Grange Hill Home and Away* is the mixture as before: snappy dialogue; a few good jokes; pseudo-epic narrative intrudes; and the pleasing bumbling of the current bully "Gripper" Stobson.

Robert Leeson leaves *Grange Hill* to take one of its pupils, Superstar Tucker Jenkins, into the real world of the job Centre (*Forty Days of Tucker J.*), is aimed at teenagers. Six weeks of idling, drinking, muckshovelling, being taken for a ride, and motorbike repairing find Tucker J. marginally sadder and wiser, and no further on. The unemployed school-leaver is perhaps too depressing a subject to make good reading (though the television series has been popular); certainly, *Grange Hill* out of school seems to have lost its zest.

Back in the classroom, tough Miss Pritchard of *The Siege of Cobb Street School* is a fine example of the old-style teacher – a large autocratic lady who is a dab hand at bullies and then entirely competent to deal with the two baddies who hold her class hostage. A pool of confiscated plastic blood and the descent of the prize-winning Observer class collage provide a triumphant finish to a cheerful adventure for seven to ten-year-olds. There are no pretensions to realism here, although the children – all talk and conjuring tricks – will be familiar to many.

Pupils and teachers take second place in Beverly Cleary's *Ralph S. Mouse* (the S stands for smart), the tale of a motor-bike-riding rodent who moves into school for a quiet life. The mouse admires the teacher's long shiny hair – perfect for tying up his bike's exhaust – but he finds school life pretty hectic, especially when the class decide to do a great mouse project and Ralph is displayed in a golden bowl and made to run through a cardboard maze in a learning experiment. Beverly Cleary never lets her ironic view of school life dominate the mouse's adventure, contenting herself with the odd detail, such as Ralph's diet of library paste and lentils that have fallen off Class Five's collage. The setting is a bonus in a lively story for the under tens.

Jan Mark's teenagers abuse each other in a characteristically unimpressive way, but the primary age group

is much more adventurous. "Soggy pancake", "booface", "spaggle legs", "copper-bottomed four-flushing demon", "monster", "beast", "freak" and "freak" are used variously in *The Myniglo Kid*. Dreadful Denzil is an eight-year-old fiend/freak/monster who autographs his crimes with the words "Batman" in Myniglo toothpaste. The story turns on a vital cricket match which reveals the dreadful Denzil to be a brilliant batsman in more than just toothpaste. Too much shouting, barking, splatting and kerpopping mars an otherwise enjoyable and undemanding read for the nine to eleven age range, suitable also for its bossy black heroine who usefully disposes of a range of prejudices.

The children in Miss Mee's reception class in *Tales from Allotment Lane School* are carefully multi-ethnic. The documentation of first-school life is carefully done: the variety of food brought to school, fear of the older classes, escaped caterpillars, revelations of home life – all will strike chords with adults. But do very young children want to be told it like it is? These are not so much stories as vignettes of school life. Only "Jan's useful collection" stands as a good read-aloud story. And it has to be said that the shade of Joyce Grenfell hovers over the tale of the muddled-up cards and Miss Mee's immortal words: "What a shame we have some sillies who have no names inside their woolies".

Education does have its light moments; in fact it's not nearly as serious a business as teachers try to make out. So the question remains: why are the only successful school stories boarding school romances and television spin-offs?

JAN MARK: *FEET* and other stories. Kestrel, £4.95. 0 7226 5839 7.

FAY SAMPSON: *SUS*. Denon Dobson. £5.95. 0 234 72299 1.

VERA BOYLE: *Alice's Part*. Mscmith. £5.95. 0 333 3427 0 4.

ROBERT LEESON: *Grange Hill Home & Away*. BBC. £5.95. 0 563 20130 4.

ROBERT LEESON: *Forty Days of Tucker J.* BBC. £5.95. 0563 20181 9.

HAZEL TOWNSON: *The Siege of Cobb Street School*. Anderson. £2.95. 0 86264 041 5.

BEVERLY CLEARY: *Ralph S. Mouse*. Hamish Hamilton. £4.95. 0 243 10883 7.

GILLIAN CROSS: *The Myniglo Kid*. Methuen. £3.95. 0 416 25420 9.

MARGARET JOY: *Tales from Allotment Lane School*. Faber. £4.50. 0 571 11992 1.

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SUMMER READING

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The Virtues of Cyril Connolly

Sir, – Everything that Julian Symonds says about Cyril Connolly is true (in his notice of David Pryce-Jones's book, July 8) – the sloth, the sloth-as-an-excuse, the snobbery, the dilettantism are all well attested. Yet I wonder if he does justice to the work.

First, Connolly could be considered a comic genius on the evidence of the best of his short pieces. Unless there is to be no literary posterity, and the Bomb "does for us" surely the parody of Huxley ("Told in Gath"), "Felicity" (female last novel) and "Where Engle's Feet To Tread" deserve a place in some imaginary pantheon devoted to Great Humour? Even though generations grow up that have never heard of Brian Howard (and perhaps not missed much) this last little fantasy *a clef* should be valuable; it exactly complements Anthony Blunt's statement that all the University intellectuals in the 1930s were Communists – or thought themselves to be. It is, in fact, a small historical document. Parodies, too, do occasionally outlive their originals ("You are old, Father William" and "The voice of the Lobster").

Second, it is at least arguable that *The Unquiet Grove*, written in 1942–43, is the great lost war poem of the Second World War – written by a civilian, and civilians suffered as much or more than the soldiers in that war, with the various massacres, the concentration camps, the starvation and displacement. Connolly, of course, didn't suffer these; he missed the social life and the travel in France. He was, however, effectively in exile, cut off from the civilization he admired. To this is added "lost love and lost youth", a nostalgia where the elegiac tone is genuine and heartfelt.

Third, there are very good bits in this journal well up to the standard of *The Unquiet Grove*.

Last, great honour should be done to a man who could describe his native land in his post-1945 manifestation as "perish, overcrowded, bureaucratic England, land of cut-throat, banned books and little class-conscious moustaches".

GAVIN EWART.
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Language Acquisition

Sir, – "Modelling the theory [of how children learn languages] ... remains an excellent test of its rigour, consistency and completeness" claims P. N. Johnson-Laird (Letters, June 24). Yet a "complete" theory would have to reflect the uses made of language for purposes other than transmitting and acquiring information – jokes, puns, teasing, ritual/incantatory, expressing love and hatred when it would not be convenient to do so. "In clear" and "double" many other such uses. It is difficult to see how these could be "modelled" in computer terms.

Another problem the theory might be able to handle, but not the computer model, is where "correctness" fits in. English children who are rising in the world learn not to refer to their napkins as serviettes (and if they are going down in the world, not to refer to the knives and forks as "the silver" at their local comprehensive). Children then decide what counts as "correct" according to external criteria. How could a model assess such criteria?

Perhaps language acquisition is more like a game, played sometimes for real, sometimes for fun, that you get better at the more you play. But not a game like chess, which notoriously lends itself to computer modelling. More like table tennis, where every situation seems unpredictable because of the dynamics. If so, it will be impossible to show that the program "learns in the same way as children" because there will be no one way.

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Ernest Newman and Wagner

Sir, – I must thank Mr Nicholson for correcting me about Ernest Newman's providing of the dates of the first Ring cycle in Volume Four of *The Life of Richard Wagner*, though Mr Nicholson says that he gives them in the second half of Chapter 26, whereas in fact he gives them on the second page of that chapter. That doesn't, of course, do anything to excuse my carelessness.

However, it is notable that Newman provides the dates in the context of dismantling Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche's account of why her brother left Bayreuth when he did, and the dates are provided in the chapter entitled "Elisabeth's False Witness" and not in the chapter "The Festival and After", where one might expect them. The fact that the latter chapter is fourteen pages long – not a great deal of space to devote to the crowning achievement of Richard Wagner's life – whereas sorting out the time of and reasons for Nietzsche's departure occupies forty-nine pages, seems to me to substantiate as conclusively as possible my claim that Newman's sense of proportion had deserted him. He tells us in the foreword to Volume Four that he had intended to write a book on Nietzsche, but finally decided to incorporate the material in the Wagner biography; the result is a disastrous imbalance. And the same is true of much of the last volume, which has much more the aspect of a series of scholarly essays on aspects of the chronology of Wagner's life than a majestic biography, such as the first three volumes present us with. The fact that Newman chose to conclude the whole vast undertaking with a savage attack on one paragraph of a review of Volume Three reinforces the point.

MICHAEL TANNER.
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English Literary Manuscripts

Sir, – On June 30, 1978 you kindly published an appeal on my behalf for information as to the whereabouts of various "lost" manuscripts to be recorded in Volume 1 (1450–1625) of the *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*. As a result of response from your readers this appeal led to the redaction of several relevant items.

May I now make a similar appeal in connection with my forthcoming Volume 2, covering the period 1625–1700 (and including a supplement to Volume 1) 1 list below some of the more notable "lost" items to be recorded. Any information as to the present or recent whereabouts of any of these items will be very greatly appreciated.

I may add that the authors to be included in Part 1 of Volume 2 are: Aphra Behn, Sir T. Browne, Bunyan, S. Butler, Carew, Clarendon, Cowley, Corbett, Cowley, Crashaw, Davenant, Denham, Dryden, E. Earle, Etherege, Evelyn, Farquhar, Fuller, W. Habington, Halifax, J. Harrington, Herrick, Hobbes, H. King.

APRHA BEHN, latter to J. Tonson (Sotheby's, March 17, 1930, lot 183, to Maggs).

ABRAHAM COWLEY, letters, notably to Sir Robert Long (Sotheby's, April 19, 1905, and July 25, 1938), besides Bodleian, Pennsylvania and Yale, and to Henry Bennet (recorded 1702).

RICHARD CRASHAW, *Steps to the Temple* (1648 edition), partly made up of proof-sheets and with MS copies possibly by Dudley Lovelace, of poems by Richard Lovelace, Thomas Fuller, Crashaw and others (Sotheby's, May 1937, lot 533, to Dobell).

to the editor

Downham, Suffolk (Dawson Turner, 1956).

JOHN DAVOEN, any printed or MS books owned or annotated by him, notably presentation copies of *Fables* (1700), besides Trinity College Spencer and Yale Juvenal. HENRY KING, letters, especially John Hama collection, including letters by King (to Richard Powell, 1639) and by ISAAC WALTON (1612) (Sotheby's, December 9, 1929, lot 152, to Dobell; the catalogue giving no indication of the importance of this collection), and a series to Mr More of Morehouse, Sussex (W. R. W. Stephens, 1881).

RICHARD LOVELACE, inscription "Richard Lovelace, 1630, March 5" in copy of Nicolas Cleynearts, *Inscriptions Graecae Linguae* (1628). ANDREW MARVELL, MS of Restoration verse owned in 1930s by Marvell's editor H. M. Margoliouth, and letters besides those printed by Margoliouth.

JOHN MILTON, books purporting to be owned by Milton (besides Harvard). MICHAEL AND COMMERSON. Books, of Mary Browne, 4to, 86 leaves, with poems by Donne, Corbett, Wotton, or of P. J. Dobell, *Literature of the Restoration*, 1918, item 1240; Valentine Cabbec of Pembroke College, Cambridge, c. 1680 (C. W. Brodribb, 1926); Richard Duke (1652–1733) of Otterton, Devon, 8vo, c. 800 pages, c. 1667 (A. de Castro Glubb, Liskeard, Cornwall, 1918).

KATHERINE PHILLIPS, (i) letter to Dorothy Temple, January 22, 1664 (Maggs, cat. 646, 1937, item 525); (ii) any other original letters; (iii) MS poems, folio, 259 pages, Phillips, MS. 4001 (Sotheby's, November 11, 1946, lot 164, to Myers).

THOMAS RANOLPH, MS play *The University Pedlar* (Richard West in 18th century, afterwards the Revd Mr Collins of Knaresborough, West Yorkshire).

SIR JOHN VANBRUGH, letters and documents in private ownership. EDMUND WALLER, *Poems* (1664) with MS copies of poems by Waller at back (F. Cunningham, Notes & Queries, March 10, 1866).

ISAAC WALTON, books owned, inscribed by annotated by him. WILLIAM WYCHERLEY, presentation copies of *Miscellaneous Poems* (1704).

PETER BEAL.
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Blinded by Mushrooms

Sir, – The editors of *The Merchant of Venice* continue to regard "sand-blind" (II.2.71) as a vulgar term for "purblind" (Arden), "partly blind" (Riverside), "dull of sight" (Signet). There is, however, more to "sand-blind" than meets the eye. In Shakespeare's day "sand-blind" was a term with a socio-medical history and was associated with the gathering of mushrooms. Gerard's *Herball* (1633) has a detailed discussion of *Pungus oryctolichus*, which was known popularly as "fused balls", "Pucke Fusse", and "Buffs" (pp 1582–4). According to Gerard, it had multiple uses: in beekeeping "to kill or smother Bees"; in medicine "to alleviate the pain of sores and blisters"; and for rural dwellers an inexpensive method of preserving fire and providing illumination "to carry and reserve fire from place to place".

Gerard urged caution in using these mushrooms because "being trodden upon do breath forth a most thin and fine powder, like unto smoke, very noisome and hurtfull unto the eyes, causing a kind of blindness, which is called Poor-blind, or Sand-blind".

The origin, then, of "sand-blind" is fuliginous fugal. Whether or not Shakespeare's Old Gobbo was a mushroom-gatherer (he was surely a wool-gatherer), he regarded himself as "sand-blind". His son, to outdo him in "such branches of learning" as would enable him to transcend "plain terms" (II.2.60–1), created a new term, "high gravel-blind" (II.2.64). The latter would undoubtedly have been familiar with the ophthalmic condition known as "sand-blindness" and wary of

mushroom dust. They would also have been delighted with the tricky word invented by young Launcelot Gobbo to "defy the matter" – and his father.

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Formalism and Marxism

Sir, – A propos of my review of Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory* (June 10) René Wellek points out (Letters, July 15) the historical context in which hostility occurred between the doctrines of the Formalists and those of official Russian Communism. I have long admired Professor Wellek's exact and wide-ranging scholarship, especially in the field of comparative literary theory, and I am sure he is right about this. What I was trying to suggest, however, was something rather different; namely, that all such critical theories and techniques (this century have a good deal in common, and specifically in common with the Marxist approach. Like Marxism they have been concerned with diagnosis and action, with developing a terminology of theory and a mode of analysis that will "solve the problem". The common reader and critic have never seen their pursuit of true judgment in this light.

JOHN BAYLEY.
St Catherine's College, Oxford.

John Payne Collier

Sir, – Whatever may be the truth about the forgeries with which John Payne Collier has been charged, some indication of his attitude towards source material is provided by the historical introduction and text that he provided to accompany George Cruikshank's illustrations for *Punch and Judy* in 1828. This is one of Collier's earliest works and it is, indeed, a remarkable piece of historical investigation for its time and for such a young man. Strangely, Dewey Ganzel devotes only a passing reference to it in his *Fortune and Men's Eyes*. But a critical examination reveals what can only charitably be described as a cavalier treatment of his sources and may, more sharply, be condemned as gross falsification. The details of these were given in a Note I contributed to *Notes & Queries* (I, 1, 1954) and in *A History of the English Puppet Theatre* (1955), so they were available to Dewey Ganzel if he had wished to take account of them.

The fact that the young Payne Collier mingled his erudition with inventing ballads, poems and newspaper articles which he passed off as original sources in what may have seemed a very serious subject of study is certainly no proof that the more elderly scholar invented or even forged Elizabethan documents or Shakespearean annotations. But it is a consideration that should, I suggest, have been alluded to.

GEORGE SPEAIGHT.
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Punting

Sir, – With perhaps the restraint your reviewer of *Punting* (July 15) so kindly attributed to me, I forbore from lamenting the ban on punting at Eton in 1832, and thereby allowed him to describe punting as "the only water sport for grown-ups".

Alas, watermanship at Eton (and in other schools to which I set an example) may have diminished because of the ban. Eton boys consider themselves the best of watermen, but they never afterwards learnt its superior skills by punting. In a recent BBC "Nationwide" broadcast, Penny Chuter, senior rowing coach for Britain, said the best age to begin to punt was twelve.

R. T. RIVINGTON.
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Johnson's Dictionary

Sir, – I am grateful to Robert DeMaria, Jr (Letters, June 24) for his comments on my letter of May 27 concerning Johnson's Dictionary. He gives a very useful sampling of places in the work where Johnson, while faithfully recording their occurrence, nevertheless objects (often with justice) to what he thinks to be illogical or sloppy coinages or perversions of the English language.

But is this evidence of Johnson's desire for stabilization of the language? When, as DeMaria points out, he accuses Hooker, Bacon, Sandys and Herbert of "ignorantly" perpetrating the double negative "disannul", is he trying to "stabilize" or "fix" the language by noting this usage? Does he want people to go on using it? Surely not. He is conscientiously carrying out what he conceives to be his duty of calling attention to usages that are best avoided if the language is to communicate clearly and unambiguously – let us call it *clarification* or *rectification*.

Many later respected lexicographers have also felt this to be their duty. The Fowler brothers, who compiled *Modern English Usage* as well as the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, certainly did, in a celebrated critique of Webster's *Third New International Dictionary* ("The String Untuned", *New Yorker*, March 10, 1962; reprinted in his *Against the American Grain*). Dwight Macdonald fulminated against that work's contributing to the debasement of accurate communication by condoning the synonymous use of *imply*, *hinder*, *disinterested/uninterested*, *depreciate/deprecate* and so on, practices which its predecessor had warned against. R. W. Burchfield and his associates are politer than Johnson usually is, but their motive is surely similar when, in Supplement II to the OED, they remark of the new signification given in the 1960s and 1970s to *hopefully* (conflicting with its normal sense of "in a hopeful manner"), "(Cf. G. Hoffenlich it is to be hoped). Orig. U.S. (Avoided by many writers.)" I like to think that my letter to you of March 31, 1972, commenting on the first (and last?) appearance of this confusing neologism in your usually chaste columns, helped to inspire this entry.

Nor are what might be called "social" considerations of usage even yet thought irrelevant. The Fowlers are harsh on the jargon (Johnson's "cant") of advertising and cheap journalism. Macdonald gives an example of what the *laissez faire* of Webster's *Third* might lead to – Johnson admired Goldsmith's literary talent, although he considered him a jerk. I won't comment on the OED Supplement's "Orig. U.S. (Avoided by many writers.)"

May I take this opportunity to correct some of I. E. Jones's misapprehensions in his defence (Letters, May 6) of "Doctor" Johnson? Whatever Hawkins's printer chose to put in the running heads of his *Life*, in Hawkins's actual text he refers, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, to "Johnson" *four* court. Both Hawkins and Boswell record Johnson's intense dislike of the epithet: it was only after Johnson's death that Boswell, from whatever motive, changed the "Mr Johnsons" of his manuscripts. Hebrides journal to "Dr Johnsons" in the printed version. No editions of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* appeared in his lifetime with "LL.D." on the title-page: Johnson's deathbed request was only that a stone be placed over his tomb in Westminster Abbey, not that the letters "LL.D." appear on it. Many of Johnson's contemporaries who held DDs, MDs and LL.Ds were also often referred to in their time as "Doctors". Must we therefore go on writing "Doctor" Swift? "Doctor Goldsmith"? "Doctor Smollett"? "Doctor Benjamin Franklin" and so on?

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207pp. Bodley Head. £9.95.
0 370 30529 9

Many books on animal navigation have been written by professional zoologists in recent years, but this is probably the first time that a professional navigator has turned his attention to the intriguing zoological problems of how animals find their way from one place to another. The result is a fascinating and surprising book. E. W. Anderson's approach is both broad and novel. Beginning with accounts of stabilizers and the sense of time, he passes on to discuss the senses employed in hunting and avoiding predation, and concludes with explanations of how migrating animals find their way. At times, his comments seem somewhat naïve:

The octopus, a creature with a reputation for intelligence, thought it has been known to devour its own tentacles, lives by hunting and is also pursued by many eels and by whales. . . . One crustacean, which probably appeared on this planet a hundred thousand years ago, now lives in caves at the bottom of deep oceans where there is no light. . . . Man, the so-called "highest" animal, uses his or her nose mainly to warm the air going into the lungs. . . .

The biologist, trained at all costs to avoid teleological explanations, will doubtless endure numerous "culture shocks" on entering the alien, and in this respect less fastidious, world of the navigating officer. On the other hand, Wing Commander Anderson, a former Pathfinder, sheds the light of his deep understanding on the complexities of nature in a manner that many biologists would do well to emulate.

Dragonflies, which travel very fast, have heavy heads and it requires more energy to rotate them than other parts of their bodies. Tufts of biplane round their necks can deflect a sense, angular acceleration, and do not like stopping work every time the sun goes behind a cloud. Fortunately, their eyes, being small, can detect the very short ultra-violet light waves which penetrate cloud. . . .

While dolphins and toothed whales have "ear-holes" which are lip-sided, one higher than the other, like the flaps of an owl. So, when they are using sonar, they weave their heads from side to side and also nod up and down. . . . Elementary wave-theory shows that animals can use radio only in a very restricted fashion. . . . while the sonar

designer's preference for ultrasonics emphasizes the high aerial directivity of rustling sounds; hence rabbits employ drumming for alarm signals.

The author has a racy style. One may not object to the "timid variety of feel, hiding from the hungry by day," which has "an eye-cell in the tail to advise it when darkness has fallen. . . .", or to "Male grasshoppers and crickets rub legs and wings together, which seems to please the females much more than their personal appearances", but one must, nevertheless, draw the line at some of his numerous misstatements and half-truths. The omnithalia of compound eyes are not single eyes; the woodlouse has a cuticle or integument, but not a skin; reptiles are not largely colour-blind and, even if they were, their sombre appearance would probably be related more to the colour vision of their predators than of themselves. To a biologist it is surprising, too, to come across any modern book in which the metric system has not been employed, and in which fractions are quoted rather than decimals.

Although he mentions K. Schmidt-Koenig's views regarding bird navigation, Anderson argues convincingly in favour of the bi-coordinate hypothesis of G. V. T. Matthews, despite the fact that this has received little experimental confirmation from other zoologists in recent years. The experimental evidence for and against the alternative points of view is not given. In fact, the first necessitates memory of the whole of the sun's arc at the bird's home; the second - which claims that latitude and longitude are used to establish position - requires the apparent movement of the sun to be extrapolated, but reduces the memory required to a single point. It seems almost inconceivable that a bird should be able to measure changes in the horizontal movement or azimuth of the sun while flying over the ocean when there are no stable points of reference.

Not surprisingly, the best parts of *Animals as Navigators* are those concerned with basic technical principles and their application to animals; for instance, when the bi-coordinate dance of the honey-bee is compared to the "race-track" pattern by which the pilot of a light aircraft returns to the landing strip after overflying an airfield; or when the human eye is considered as an optical instrument: "The lens is so poor we have to cut out the edges by screwing up our eyes if we want to look at anything really small." Anderson makes a good point when he states that the importance of stabilizers in navigation has not been fully appreciated by animal specialists, but the book should have been vetted by a zoologist, to have its biological imperfections corrected. It is an outstanding text none the less.

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Nineteenth-century ornithological evidence, which includes Von Hoyer's first known record (1861) and that of Lord Lilford (best known for his discovery of the Balearic lizard which bears his name), is believed by Dr. Bannerman to be "scientifically negligible" compared to that amassed in the twentieth century. The pioneering German, Von Jordans, collected 1,300 skins as well as eggs and nests for the Museum Koenig in Bonn between 1914 and 1927. Captain Magnus, an Englishman who arrived in Mallorca in 1919, published observations during his first eleven years in the Balearics and no less than sixteen of his papers are referred to in Bannerman's bibliography. At times Bannerman finds him unwarrantedly critical. Von Jordans, another military birdwatcher, the air commander of Mallorca during the 1930s, Colonel José Tito Cumming, evidently became interested in the ecology of the island after completing an aerial survey, he subsequently contributed to ornithological journals and personally flew a low over

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The scaly sort

Allen Paterson

H. H. DAVIDIAN

The Rhododendron Species: Volume 1, Lepidotes

431pp, with 95 colour photographs, 9 pages of black-and-white photographs and 40 line-drawings. Batsford. £35.
0 7134 1639 4

It is safe to assert that no plant genus has had more effect upon British gardens than the rhododendron, and this in spite of the fact that as so invertebrate cold-climate, no rhododendron can exist, except as a sickly chlorotic creature, on half the ground in this country. But then few genera are so diverse in form. Its species vary from tall forest trees to tiny alpine shrublets; while most are evergreen with leaves that can be under half an inch or over half a yard in length, one major group, the azaleas, is deciduous and offers as a bonus brilliant autumn colour. Floral display from January to July is often dramatic in a colour range which encompasses everything but the truest of true blue. Scent can be almost as intoxicating as the Rhododendron *Luteum* honey which reportedly sent Xenophon's soldiers mad as they crossed the Pootic Alps. The leaves of some species are so aromatic they can be made into herbal teas.

Absent from Africa and South America, rhododendrons are native to most areas of the world, from the circumpolar Arctic to the rain-forests of Queensland. Their centre of

distribution is Western China, from which they seem to spill as from an inexhaustible cornucopia: all the great Himalayan plant collectors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries sent back rhododendrons. Though they were not the first rhododendrons to be introduced to Britain, J. D. Hooker's thirty species from Sikkim accelerated the flow, which continued for 150 years from Robert Fortune, E. H. Wilson, Reginald Farrer, Kingston-Ward and others. In the course of seven expeditions between 1904 and 1930, George Forrest discovered and introduced 250 distinct species. Perhaps because Himalayan rhododendrons do so well in Scottish gardens, Edinburgh became the seedcentre for the genus: in the second decade of this century alone 312 new species were described in the *Notes from the Royal Botanic Garden*.

Revision necessitated by continuing collections from the wild and new taxonomic studies has provided H. H. Davidian with his life's work. This, after forty years, he has now presented to us in part I *The Rhododendron Species*, Volume 1, on the scaly-leaved Lepidotes. Woll over 300 species are described and discussed in minute detail and this, with the dichotomous keys, should make it possible for anyone with a bit of background or strong native wit to identify any lepido species in cultivation.

As a direct successor to the Edinburgh pundits of the first half of the century, Mr. Davidian holds rigorously to their classification. He justifies this retention point by point, repeating, "thus (or therefore) we have two large natural divisions of

Rhododendrons Lepidotes (scaly) Elepidotes (non-scaly)". The present reviewer is not up to serious Ericaceous in-fighting but Davidian makes it abundantly clear that he holds no truck with other recent revisions of the genus and the status of the series system. Brickell, Cullen and Chamberlain, the Philippines and Steumer all get pretty soon ditched. These revisions "are not acceptable in this book, and will not be recognized". Whether the present or posterity implied is not quite certain.

For bumble morris, without the dozen acres or so once considered obligatory for rhododendrons, Davidian's work still has much to offer. The Lepidotes are generally the smaller species, some of which fill the ecological niche in their Himalayan homes that beater occupies in Britain. Thus many are fine small-garden plants; others, taller but of elegant habit, are the members of the ravishing *Cinnabarinum* series; while still others, such as the incredible *R. dalzielii*, whose flowers are shaped, sized and scented like some vast trumpet lily, are possible small greenhouse pot-plants. Davidian seldom permits superlatives but gleams of enthusiasm shine through the botanically exact text. Batsford has produced a fine book, though the quality of the ninety-five colour illustrations is uneven. Some are excellent, others are not worth their space. The same criticism applies to the - doubtless historic - tinted photographs of J. F. Rock. However the forty line-drawings by Helen Jackson and Rodella Furva (unfortunately uncredited in the preface) are superb.

The lowest of the low

Pat Morris

DEREK FRAZER

Reptiles and Amphibians in Britain
250pp. Collins. £11.
0 00 219706 5

For cold-blooded creatures like snakes and lizards, sun-bathing is not just a pleasant pastime but a necessity. Warmth from the sun is crucial to their very existence and it therefore comes as no surprise that cool, cloudy Britain has only six native species of reptiles (snakes and lizards) and a similar number of amphibians (frogs, toads and newts). A few additional species have been introduced from warmer climates, but have mostly failed in the struggle and become extinct here. Many people will view this with relief, since reptiles and amphibians are not everyone's favourites; but the paucity of our herpetofauna does make things

difficult for an author trying to write an authoritative book about them. Despite these problems, Derek Frazer has produced a worthy addition to the long line of "New Naturalist" volumes. His is an interesting, informative and very readable book. There is a lengthy introduction for the non-specialist, covering major aspects of herpetology, from fossils to phylogeny. For the specialist, there is a 400-item bibliography and, in the intervening 200 pages, comprehensive accounts of the ecology of British species of reptiles and amphibians. There are no digressions, though the style is so concise as to read a little oddly in places; eg, a reference to "warmly coloured insects".

Inevitably one compares Frazer's book with its predecessor in the same series, the late Malcolm Smith's *The British Amphibians and Reptiles*; first published in 1951 and updated (by Frazer himself) through four editions till 1969. The new book has fewer pages, but it is compensated for by smaller typeface. Smith gave us a wealth of personal observations; many of them are usefully repeated by Frazer and supplemented by a wider review of the subject. Apart from being more up to date, Frazer also includes turtles and gives a lot of zoological information absent from the earlier work.

A most interesting and helpful addition to Frazer's book is the detailed section on Conservation and Legislation. This is an area in which we have been active himself both as former President of the British Herpetological Society and a senior officer of the Nature Conservancy Council. He shows clearly how conservation requires very explicit biological information as the basis for active habitat management. I have read few accounts which bring out so well the difference between the conservation of reptiles and amphibians, and more generally, perhaps finds a serious weakness only in Defoe. Williams's edition, now out of print, was followed by Herbert Davis's volume in the Oxford Standard Authors series, which adjusted several of the dates and added heavily on revisions in later editions of Smith's verse, especially George Faulkner's collection of 1735.

Pat Rogers's new edition wisely builds upon the work of both Williams and Davis, but nevertheless differs in their collections in several important ways. In keeping with the examples of the Penguin/Yale series, the edition presents a modernized text in spelling, in the use of capitals

case always his. The speaker of the poem finds himself excluded and in the fourth line presses for re-admission, with the strange proposal that he be allowed to compete in devotion with the poems themselves. Thus the Dedication, as it unfolds, turns out to be no dedication but rather a prayer. Yet generations of literate readers, if asked "To whom did Herbert dedicate *The Temple*?" would answer, "To God".

Barbara Leah Harman, in her subtle, exciting book, shows how the obliteration of the speaker and the collapse of his proffered act of devotion is re-enacted, over and over again, in Herbert's poetry. The "Jordan" poems teach us to despise, not just other kinds of poetry, but the very literary arts on which they, as poems, rely. "The Colls" celebrates a dream of separate, vivid adoration, and then relinquishes the dream. The Pilgrimage seems at first to employ the ancient Christian conception of a significant journey towards God, but then we find that the pilgrim's actions are, once again, re-empted and nullified by God. Readers will recognize in Ms Harman's "collapsing poem" a version of the "self-consuming artifacts" of Stanley Fish.

Herbert the speaker finds that he cannot give his poems to God, but Horbert the author, who stage-manages the whole operation, nevertheless prints the poem and calls it a Dedication. Herbert the speaker is dissolved but Herbert the author must survive to supervise the dissolution. Inside the fiction, God dissolves; outside, the author conducts the entire process. Now if we suppose for a moment that Herbert the author believed the theology expressed within the poems, we have a very odd state of affairs indeed. Harman steers firmly to the speaker and avoids any talk of the author; this self-imposed restriction to some extent prevents her from noticing certain immense questions, implied by her admirable analysis.

Apheicism in Herbert's time had consciously reacted against the austerities of Calvin and Luther. Church furnishing and English literary style might properly be "beautified" once more, for the Bible itself was beautiful. Yet the central doctrines of Augustine and Calvin did not die; man is totally depraved and can do nothing of himself. There was some pretence that the two doctrines were compatible, since the first dealt with essentials, the second with essentials.

But to truth the radical theology was always potentially fatal to the less radical. If man is depraved then human poetry is likewise depraved. It is as if Herbert the author is a relatively relaxed Anglican while Herbert the speaker in the poems is often a radical Protestant. Ms Harman says that in "Jordan II" "Christ really interrupts." "Really" is a much abused word. Christ interrupts Herbert the speaker but the interruption was scripted by Herbert the author. Herbert may really have believed that man should repent his own efforts to "improve" the word of God. But what in that case must be have thought of one who turned God's very prerogative to correct such impulses into distinctive (Herbertian) poetry?

Swift's Landscape, by Carol Fabricant, referred to above by Richard Wendorf, has recently been published (318pp. Johns Hopkins University Press. £20. 0 818 2721 3). Professor Fabricant's aim is to "re-construct and explore the significance of . . . Swift's landscape, by which I mean both the actual features of his physical surroundings, and the discursive, highly distinctive way in which he perceived them

PAT ROGERS (Editor)

Jonathan Swift: The Complete Poems

950pp. Yale University Press. £26 (paperback, Penguin £9.95).
0 300 02966 7

"Is the postical works of Dr Swift", Johnson argued in his *Lives of the English Poets*, "there is not much upon which the critic can exercise his powers". The past decade, however, seems finally to have proved Johnson wrong. Before 1977 there were only two major studies solely devoted to Swift's verse: F. Elrington Ball's posthumous volume of 1929 (still a useful book) and Maurice Johnson's *The Verse of W.H.*, published in 1950. In the past few years, however, the critical tide has begun to run in Swift's favour. We now have full-length books by Nora Groff Jaffe (1977), Peter J. Schakel (1978), John Irwin Fischer (1978), and A. B. England (1980), as well as two volumes of essays, one appearing in *Papers on Language & Literature* (1978), the other edited by Fischer and Donald Moll (1980). Separate articles continue to appear at a steady clip, and many of the most distinguished general studies of Swift - especially those by John Cheyney, Claude Rawson, and more recently Carol Fabricant - focus on the poetry as well as the prose. The tide is obviously ripe for a new edition of Swift's poetry that will assimilate what these scholars have discovered and provide a new school of readers with full and accurate texts.

The new generation of Swiftians has relied, for the most part, on Sir Harold Williams's pioneering edition of 1937, revised with revisions in 1958. The major contribution of Williams's edition was his series of revisions to Swift's poems. This was a notoriously difficult task, and it remains one of Swift's editors today. The sheer variety of Swift's modes of publication - and of revision, suppression, and denial of publication - has no rival in eighteenth-century poetry publishing and, more generally, perhaps finds a serious weakness only in Defoe. Williams's edition, now out of print, was followed by Herbert Davis's volume in the Oxford Standard Authors series, which adjusted several of the dates and added heavily on revisions in later editions of Smith's verse, especially George Faulkner's collection of 1735.

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The canonical Dean

Richard Wendorf

and italics, and in the adjustment of punctuation (situation here Professor Rogers follows sensible contemporary pointing whenever possible). The result is a handsome, uncluttered, reliable text that will make Swift's poetry more accessible to both the scholar and the general reader than it has ever been before. Textual variants, headnotes, and annotation are sensibly included at the end of the volume, and Rogers's introduction provides a clear and full explanation of his editorial policies - and of the difficulties inherent in his task.

This edition also differs from its predecessors in Rogers's willingness to amend his copy-text with variants drawn from other sources, a procedure he follows "with caution but without extreme puritanical inhibition". Dubious editions, he shows, are occasionally helpful where the copy-text is reticent; and he makes a strong case for the "supplementation" of the "Verses on the Death of Dr Swift" in order to make it thoroughly intelligible. Rogers re-introduces the original titles of all the poems he prints, and reasonably relegates drafts of Swift's poetry to an appendix (the exception is the inclusion of "The Life and Genuine Character of Dr Swift", which he believes represents an unquestionably different poem from Swift's "Verses" on himself). Rogers also makes more cautious use of the variants found in the uncancelled copy of Faulkner's 1735 edition discovered in the English Faculty Library at Oxford: Rogers prudently includes early readings whose revision was dictated "by a kind of auto-censorship, arising from a fear of suppression", but he follows the revised readings in a few places where they appear to represent Swift's changed intentions.

The number of new poems introduced into the canon is rather modest and, perhaps because of this, the discussion of this aspect of the edition is not as clear as it might be. In the introduction, Rogers states that he has included "Swift's ballad on the Westminster election in 1710", but it takes some work to discover that this is the poem entitled "A Dialogue between Captain Tom and Sir Henry Dutton Colt". A related problem emerges in the discussion of poems attributed to Swift. Doubtful attributions are discussed generally in a one-page appendix, without a prolonged examination of poems that have been excluded from this edition. Williams, on the other hand, devoted one hundred pages to these poems and to headnotes assessing their authenticity. A more thorough discussion here would have been useful. Doubtful poems that have been retained in this edition are designated by an asterisk in the table of contents, but no such signal has been included with the texts

themselves, or in the index of titles and first lines, and a casual examination of the poems alone may therefore prove hazardous.

Next to the establishment of the canon of Swift's poems, their dating has remained the most elusive issue for modern editors. The author of the advertisement to the *Poems* of 1735, "Our intentions to the time they were writ in; but we could not do so exactly as we desired, because we could never get this least satisfaction in that or many other circumstances from the supposed author." Rogers estimates that he has been able to adjust the dates of roughly 10 per cent of the poems in Williams's edition, and this is a healthy improvement. But even if dates for many of the poems remain relatively soft, it would have been helpful to have had them printed with the texts of the poems as well as in the headnotes at the back of the volume.

Just as questionable, I think, is Rogers's decision to print Swift's own notes to his poems within the annotation rather than beneath the texts. This policy even seems at odds with one of the principles of modernization that governs the edition as a whole: "to provide the reader with the kind of signals he or she would have received as a contemporary of Swift". Surely these notes constitute an important signal for readers today as well as for Swift's contemporaries; they are certainly more revealing than many of the "unintelligible archaisms in presentation" that Rogers wisely eschews.

The question of modernization is always tricky, and it is possible that some scholars will wish to quote from Williams's old-spelling text while keeping an eye on the variants introduced in Rogers's edition. Rogers assures us, however, that he has not attempted "to turn Swift into an honorary twentieth-century poet, even if that were possible", and his preference for contemporary punctuation is tied to this principle. But even here there are occasional problems, for some of the punctuation retained in this edition works of cross purposes with the modernized spelling, capitalization, and italics. Here is an example from the first stanza of the first poem in this edition, the "Ode to the King":

What can the poet's humble praise?
What can the poet's humble bays?
(We poets of our bays allow,
Translated to the hero's brow)
Add to the victor's happiness?

Surely the modern reader will find the question marks at the close of these first two lines needlessly interruptive, and perhaps more obstructive than the old quills introduced by the eighteenth-century printing house. In cases such as

this, I would argue for over greater modernization of the text.

Perhaps the most important contributions, however lie in the back matter of Rogers's edition, especially in his judicious headnotes, the annotation, and the biographical dictionary. In a sense these features bar out Joseph Walton's comment that Swift was not a "pure" poet, for they emphasize the intricate biographical contexts in which many of the poems were written. In an essay of 1970 that has frequently been quoted by more recent critics, Maurice Johnson wonders "whether the special quality of Swift's poems may not work through his own biographical presence. . . . As much as for any poet of his day, his own identity and his poetry seem inseparable." Rogers's ample introductions to each poem - as well as his forty-page biographical supplement - should make this presence even more accessible. As Rogers wisely remarks, "in such areas, if this edition does not make a substantial advance on its predecessors, it can only be through manifest incompetence on the part of the editor" - and this is surely not the case here.

The nature of Swift's allusions also emerges more clearly in this edition. The allusions have posed a thorny problem in recent critical studies, and it might in fact be argued that this has become as central an issue as the lingering questions about the speaker's voice or Swift's attitudes toward sex. Allusion is the object of Schakel's study, and is the starting point in Jaffe's book as well. Both of these critics, however, define Swift's use of allusion in a rather narrow way. Schakel argues that Swift was rarely subtle in his allusions, and he therefore focuses on "explicit or repeated allusions, not on references to classical figures or quotations from literary works used in passing as decoration or as a means of expression." And Jaffe, who compares Swift's allusive strategies with Pope's, believes that "Readers who listen to Swift's clues will pass lightly over matters of form and restrict any undisciplined tendency to let allusions burgeon."

The issue is an intricate one, and made all the more murky by Swift's own pronouncement in the "Verses" that "To stast a hint was never known, / But what he writ was all his own, / which is itself a borrowing (as Fischer and Rogers point out) from Denham's elegy on Cowley. Rogers's annotation reveals for the first time, however, both the breadth of Swift's allusions and his more traditional devotion to a core of classical and modern authors: Latin poetry, especially Virgil and Ovid; an evasive nod to the old new books of the Bible; Milton, But let, and Cowley from the preceding

century; and Pope, Gay, and Prior among his contemporaries. Rogers also points out Swift's frequent use of proverbs, the "Irish" rhymes that surface in his later poetry, and what he calls "generic transfers", where diction appropriate to one kind of poetry (the pastoral, for instance) is exploited in the appropriate context of a lampoon or night-piece.

"The verbal texture of Swift's poetry is more dense and richly fraught than was once supposed", Rogers argues; "it is the job of a modern editor to keep up with our new critical awareness, and to give concrete evidence of these poetic resources actually in play." Perhaps it is not hyperbolic to say that Rogers has begun to open up for Swift's poetry the intricately allusive subtext that Roger Lonsdale revealed in the poetry of Collins and Gray. The profitable attention paid to allusions, quotations, and direct references to other works has been combined with a thorough attempt to cross-reference common images and sentiments within Swift's own poems and to point out significant parallels in his other works, such as the *Pollie Conversation*. Rogers also includes an interesting note on rhyme and rhythm, which indicates the relative frequency and length of poems written during different stages in the poet's career.

In a tone appropriate to any careful editor's task, and perhaps especially suitable to the editor of Swift - Rogers notes at the beginning that his edition cannot claim to be either final or definitive. Corroboration of this statement can already be found in the work of other scholars. In separate essays, Aubrey Williams and James Woolley have presented more conclusive evidence that "A Panegyric on the Reverend Dean Swift" (which Rogers prints with an asterisk) was actually written by James Arbuckle. To his credit, however, Rogers's treatment of this poem is characteristically cautious.

Textual thickets such as these have provoked Rogers to suggest that, even in the wake of Williams's magisterial work, "a well-chanted jungle (if such a thing exists) is still a jungle." Like Sir Harold Williams's edition, Pat Rogers's volume represents an admirable attempt to clear yet more ground, especially in its close scrutiny of the contextual undergrowth of Swift's poetry. This edition should ensure that the poet Swift is both read more widely, and understood more clearly than he has been so far.

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this, I would argue for over greater modernization of the text.

Perhaps the most important contributions, however lie in the back matter of Rogers's edition, especially in his judicious headnotes, the annotation, and the biographical dictionary. In a sense these features bar out Joseph Walton's comment that Swift was not a "pure" poet, for they emphasize the intricate biographical contexts in which many of the poems were written. In an essay of 1970 that has frequently been quoted by more recent critics, Maurice Johnson wonders "whether the special quality of Swift's poems may not work through his own biographical presence. . . . As much as for any poet of his day, his own identity and his poetry seem inseparable." Rogers's ample introductions to each poem - as well as his forty-page biographical supplement - should make this presence even more accessible. As Rogers wisely remarks, "in such areas, if this edition does not make a substantial advance on its predecessors, it can only be through manifest incompetence on the part of the editor" - and this is surely not the case here.

The nature of Swift's allusions also emerges more clearly in this edition. The allusions have posed a thorny problem in recent critical studies, and it might in fact be argued that this has become as central an issue as the lingering questions about the speaker's voice or Swift's attitudes toward sex. Allusion is the object of Schakel's study, and is the starting point in Jaffe's book as well. Both of these critics, however, define Swift's use of allusion in a rather narrow way. Schakel argues that Swift was rarely subtle in his allusions, and he therefore focuses on "explicit or repeated allusions, not on references to classical figures or quotations from literary works used in passing as decoration or as a means of expression." And Jaffe, who compares Swift's allusive strategies with Pope's, believes that "Readers who listen to Swift's clues will pass lightly over matters of form and restrict any undisciplined tendency to let allusions burgeon."

The issue is an intricate one, and made all the more murky by Swift's own pronouncement in the "Verses" that "To stast a hint was never known, / But what he writ was all his own, / which is itself a borrowing (as Fischer and Rogers point out) from Denham's elegy on Cowley. Rogers's annotation reveals for the first time, however, both the breadth of Swift's allusions and his more traditional devotion to a core of classical and modern authors: Latin poetry, especially Virgil and Ovid; an evasive nod to the old new books of the Bible; Milton, But let, and Cowley from the preceding

century; and Pope, Gay, and Prior among his contemporaries. Rogers also points out Swift's frequent use of proverbs, the "Irish" rhymes that surface in his later poetry, and what he calls "generic transfers", where diction appropriate to one kind of poetry (the pastoral, for instance) is exploited in the appropriate context of a lampoon or night-piece.

"The verbal texture of Swift's poetry is more dense and richly fraught than was once supposed", Rogers argues; "it is the job of a modern editor to keep up with our new critical awareness, and to give concrete evidence of these poetic resources actually in play." Perhaps it is not hyperbolic to say that Rogers has begun to open up for Swift's poetry the intricately allusive subtext that Roger Lonsdale revealed in the poetry of Collins and Gray. The profitable attention paid to allusions, quotations, and direct references to other works has been combined with a thorough attempt to cross-reference common images and sentiments within Swift's own poems and to point out significant parallels in his other works, such as the *Pollie Conversation*. Rogers also includes an interesting note on rhyme and rhythm, which indicates the relative frequency and length of poems written during different stages in the poet's career.

In a tone appropriate to any careful editor's task, and perhaps especially suitable to the editor of Swift - Rogers notes at the beginning that his edition cannot claim to be either final or definitive. Corroboration of this statement can already be found in the work of other scholars. In separate essays, Aubrey Williams and James Woolley have presented more conclusive evidence that "A Panegyric on the Reverend Dean Swift" (which Rogers prints with an asterisk) was actually written by James Arbuckle. To his credit, however, Rogers's treatment of this poem is characteristically cautious.

Textual thickets such as these have provoked Rogers to suggest that, even in the wake of Williams's magisterial work, "a well-chanted jungle (if such a thing exists) is still a jungle." Like Sir Harold Williams's edition, Pat Rogers's volume represents an admirable attempt to clear yet more ground, especially in its close scrutiny of the contextual undergrowth of Swift's poetry. This edition should ensure that the poet Swift is both read more widely, and understood more clearly than he has been so far.

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Visibly deranged

George Steiner

THOMAS BERNHARD

Wittgensteins Neffe: Eine Freundschaft
164pp. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
3 518 01788 8

Thomas Bernhard's stock-in-trade is loathing. The object of this unrelenting loathing is "Austria". One puts the name in quotation marks because Bernhard's Austria is compounded both of closely observed historical-social reality, and of private fantasias. The Austria of *Verstörung, of Das Kalkwerk, of Anas, of Watten, of Midland in Salfis* and a dozen other short novels and stories, is the very heartland of the loathing, of the mendacious, of the complacently sadistic and morose in modern man. It is inhabited by ex-Nazis, only too eager to forget their sometime indiscretions. By city bourgeois steeped in self-congratulatory philistinism and snobbery of men and women of field and forest, of sodden valleys and fanged mountains who are little better than beasts, but beasts canorous with human cunning, avarice and cruelty. It is the land of "the cellar", of the homidically claustrophobic air-raid shelters in Salzburg in which Thomas Bernhard lived out the nightmare of his childhood. It is the ludicrous rump of an empire withering under that hydrocephalic head called "Vienna". Bernhard's Vienna is an empty yet venomous husk, a city which feigns, for purposes of tourism and self-esteem, on the ghosts of those great men whom, in their lifetimes, it excreted, pauperized or simply drove out — Mozart, Mahler, Freud, Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Kokoschka, Kraus and so many more.

Bernhard's fictions and plays turn again and again to the criminal, the

child-molester and the assassin (the world of Musil's *Moodrucker*, and of the sado-masochistic Austria-Hungary of Musil's young *Förless*, lies near to hand). The harried, essentially autistic dwellers in the dank forests of Bernhard's Steiermark — the region in which the writer himself has chosen to base his hermetic existence — are mired with infirmity, incest and mental retardation. But all these humiliated and damned creatures are infinitely preferable to the physicians who torture them uselessly, to the judges who sentence them, to the social theorists and libertarians who spin fatuous, self-serving hypotheses out of irremediable abjection. No writer since Büchner — another evident predecessor — has caricatured the powers that be with comparable nausea. Psychiatrists, in particular, are depicted time and again as the myopic tormentors of men. In short: there is no need of a transcendent hell: we have "Austria" here and now.

Bernhard established his singular vision and compelling mannerisms right from the start. There is a "Thomas Bernhard geography", a narrative cadence, unmistakable in even the earliest stories and fully organized by the time of the *Kalkwerk* and *Anas*. Dialogue is almost always internalized within the "objective" narrative; the effect is simultaneously one of stifled ghostliness and of complete authority. The very long paragraphs of the early fables have expanded into single, seamless blocks (*Wittgensteins Neffe* consists of one paragraph 164 pages long). Bernhard's sentence-structure is lapidary and hammering. The punctuation is a momentary concession or ironic counterpoint to a deliberately exhausting, monomaneiacal pressure of voice and meaning. Like Kleist before him, Thomas Bernhard is a master of repetition, of accelerating monotone. This scormer of rhetoric is a formidable rhetorician under whose anaphoric

blows the reader crumbles. Taken together, these stylistic enforcements and the obvious integrity of Bernhard's outlook — on the objects of his detestation as well as on the act of writing itself — invited comparison with Kafka. The major Austrian and German literary prizes were duly bestowed. A secondary critical and exegetical literature began to appear. It looked very much as if Bernhard would be the dominant figure in "Central European" fiction and in the further development of German prose.

Disgust, however, is short of breath. There have been in literature virtuosos of hatred, such as Dostoevsky and Proust. But where hatred is a major dynamism — in Dante's treatment of certain of his adversaries among the damned, in Dostoevsky's polemic against godless meliorism, in Proust's complex self-hatred and representation of "the cities of the plain" — counter-currents of at least equal breadth are generated. A compensatory heaven, a politics of love, a celebration of art, are offered in denial or, at the least, correction of hatred. In Swift and Céline, we can observe how nausea becomes so strident, so all-mastering, that it bends the imagination out of shape. The fiction withers into the pamphlet.

Since the mid-1970s, Bernhard has been repeating, indeed very nearly parroting, himself. The doomed landscapes, the motifs of abjection, the burrows in which first-person narrators go to maddened ground, the rage against a society, a world-order past God's mercy — all these have turned predictable and mechanical. It is as if the trap which Bernhard had constructed for our complacencies and our forgetting had closed on its maker.

Two literary sensibilities of the first rank have been spellbound by the life and style of Wittgenstein: Ingeborg Bachmann and Thomas Bernhard. Both have felt and been able to

articulate perceptions of the kind glossed over by the master's Oxbridge acolytes. In several of Bachmann's stories Wittgenstein's essential mysticism, and the pathologies of eros which seem to have generated both his unconsciously (?) historic violence, are acutely realized. Published in 1975, *Korrekturen* is not only Bernhard's masterpiece, and one of the great novels in post-war European literature (at the last count, the American English-language edition had sold a total of some fifty copies), but the most convincing "reading" we have of Wittgenstein's persona. So insistent is Bernhard's insight that we come to experience in "Roithamer" what may well have been the actual proceedings, the motions of spirit, in the early "Austrian", "late-" or "post-Jewish" mathematician-engineer and author of the *Tractatus*.

Wittgenstein's nephew Paul was born in 1907. Closely following the pattern set by his illustrious uncle, he studied mathematics and immersed himself in music. Precisely like Ludwig, Paul Wittgenstein gave away to friends, chance acquaintances and the needy his ample share of the family fortune. Starting from his thirty-fifth year, Paul suffered nervous breakdowns of deepening severity. Abandoned by almost his entire family and sometimes circle, reduced to economic penury, he alternated between spells in psychiatric wards and marginal survival in Vienna. Bernhard met Paul when he himself lay convalescing in a sanatorium after an appalling operation for the removal of a tumour in his chest (an operation from which he had barely been expected to recover). Bernhard lay in the pavilion of the moribund; Paul in that of the deranged. The shadow of death met that of madness in the no-man's land between the two wings of the hospital. Bernhard found in Wittgenstein's nephew one of the very few human beings whose estrangement from "Austria", whose fastidious addition to vent, whose mental and physical pains could match and answer to his own.

This autobiographical memoir recounts the progress of their reciprocal trust and Paul Wittgenstein's last years. Over and over, *Wittgensteins Neffe* argues a calm paradox: there are decisive levels on which we must learn to think of Ludwig and of Paul as interchangeable. Ludwig's outward behaviour was frequently as bizarre as "deranged" (in the eyes of a common sense mundanity) as was Paul's. Luck would have it that a Cambridge fellowship rescued Ludwig from the menace of "mental treatment" or a life of rural isolation, whereas Paul was delivered into the sadistic and morose "care" of the psychiatrists. Ludwig articulated his "philosophy", if it is that, as it were in spite of himself. Each of his rare publications was an agonizing compromise with a fundamental strategy of abstinence, of "non-saying". In this perspective, suggests Bernhard, Paul Wittgenstein was, very possibly the "greater" of the two. He would not complete the book which he began, though there was magic in it. He would not entrust to paper or the betrayal of common discourse the truths which he had come upon. His terrible infirmities were the necessary and sufficient proofs of his apprehensions. Hence Bernhard's central chiasmus:

The one, Ludwig, was perhaps more philosophical; the other, Paul, was perhaps crazier. But it may be that we only believe the one Wittgenstein to have been a philosopher because he made public his philosophy and not his derangement, whereas we believe the other, Paul, to have been mad only because he suppressed and did not publish his philosophy but made visible his derangement.

There are inspired pages in this memoir. Bernhard communicates Paul Wittgenstein's elusive charm, the scrupulous elegance of his manners even in destitution. He makes us feel directly the deep relations to music in Paul's thought and being. There are oases in the narrative: a wonderfully ludicrous peregrination across much of Austria in pursuit of *The Times* and *Le Monde*, there being no Austrian newspaper which would leave unsullied or undemeasured the mind and soul of a free humanist. The coffee-houses of Vienna are poignantly evoked.

But Bernhard's obsessions are again virulent. Doctors, surgeons, psychiatrists are a pack out of hell. Middle-class society and culture are odious. To be awarded a paramount literary prize by the Austrian government, to accept this prize in a public ceremony in Vienna (as Bernhard's account is rigorously autobiographical) is to place in the hands of those hypocritical fools who, in actual fact, despise serious work and merely seek to "make it harmless" by virtue of official recognition. The "madness" of a Paul Wittgenstein is sanity and holiness when it is compared to the rationality of twentieth-century society. Paul's refusal to treat money as meaningful is the sole logical rebuke of the abjections of capitalism and "Austrian" materialism. In its detestation of intellectual and ethical greatness, the Wittgenstein family takes out on Paul — who is beloved and in Vienna — the (secret) loathing of posthumous glory.

At the close of this monody, the reader cries out for air. This, of course, is Thomas Bernhard's intention. But the fulfilment of this strategy is also destructive of a great writer. Just how great is shown, once again, by the momentary shafts of light and loving intimacy in this accusing epiphany.

Zivilcourageous

Colin Russ

HELGa SCHUBERT

Das Verbotene Zimmer.
159pp. Darmstadt: Luchterhand.
1 472 86556 3

Although this collection of nineteen prose texts is subtitled "Geschichten", it belongs for practical purposes to the field of autobiography. For it represents an eye-witness account of what it has been like for the author to grow up and make her way as a writer in the German Democratic Republic, a country in which most of these pieces have not been published. Born in Berlin in 1940, Helga Schubert belonged to an age group who, as she observes, did not have to follow their immediate predecessors in starting each school lesson with a dutiful "Heil Hitler". Images and scenes of the East German society which has evolved in step with her own life are equally sardonic and historically aware: the ruling party is also the "Kommentator" of its citizens' thoughts, not a single self-confessed former Nazi is to be

found, and writers are liable to be invited to a group to an unmemorable lunch with a so-called "highly placed person".

The author's expeditions to the "forbidden room" of West Berlin and to the Soviet Union furnish the material for some of the most interesting passages in the book. West Berlin, forfeited with the rest of Germany, is a cosmopolitan and a visitor as both commercialized and intriguing (even the car fumes are more agreeable than back East). In the agreeable, opposed world of the East, the author meets the elderly Ulanova, thirty years older than she, and the mentor of young dissenters, the touching double illustration of the intersection of generations which is a recurring theme in the book.

Helga Schubert's personal life has been overshadowed by sadness and illness. Her autobiographical texts have her confronting private grief with the same steadfastness as the writer of her integrity lives in the German Democratic Republic. It is necessary to dispel the public kind of "Zivilcourage" to which the collector and its appearance are passively testifies.

Dynasts of Saxony

F. R. H. Du Boulay

K. J. LEYER

Medieval Germany and Its Neighbours 900-1250
280pp. Hambleton Press, 35 Gloucester Avenue, London NW1. £18.
0 907628 08 7

Three years after the appearance of his brilliant study of Ottonian Saxony, K. J. Leyer presents us with another volume which revolves about the same theme. This is not the sustained sequel we looked for but a collection of articles and essays published over the past two decades, together with two reflective lectures not hitherto printed in full.

The problem of collecting papers is always to impose a unified direction of thought. With disarming modesty Mr Leyer remarks of the pieces here collected, "there is, to my astonishment, a certain thematic consistency and coherence about them."

He is right in two ways. The first is stylistic. Although the essays were written for different kinds of audience, from the exacting scrutineers of learned journals to the civilized generalists of Radio 3, the prose keeps its even, clear flow. Leyer does not talk up or down. His details and annotated work are always, add speculative stimulus, while his more "popular" lectures spring from a

learning which is sensed but not paraded.

The second source of coherence is that these papers are rooted in Leyer's chosen heartland of Saxony. This is, of course, before the fragmentations of the later medieval period made "Saxony" multiple, and nobility in Leyer's Saxony is the stem-land of a dynasty which began in the tenth century to rule and order much of the north German plain. The book glances further afield, to Byzantium and to England, to make comparisons and connections, but always returns to base.

Three of the papers are of outstanding importance: on Henry I (d 936) and the beginning of the Saxon "empire"; on Ottonian government (tenth century); and on the German aristocracy from the ninth to the early twelfth century. In these papers Leyer explains Saxon military dominance, which was celebrated with exultation by Widukind, a tenth-century monk of Corvey on the upper Weser, but is here examined more deeply by Leyer himself from the documents of Corvey and other centres. A hundred years before Widukind, Saxon military standing had not been high. Good horses were scarce, and the combat skills of the Franks had not yet been matched on the Elbe. But times were changing rapidly. It is of absorbing interest that similar changes were occurring in the tenth and early eleventh century elsewhere too in northern Europe. The land began to be ruled by families which can be traced

from generation to generation and identified by their place of residence and their tenure of the high offices of count and duke. Before that date historians cannot trace dynastic continuity because the structure of families was different, not because the sources are poorer. Aristocracies had been made up of very large family groups, amorphous but conscious of nobility deriving from ancestors who might be either male or female. Only later, from the tenth century, did the enforcement of a more masculine, primogeniture succession bring into being the dynasty, named after its castle(s) and endowed from father to son with the same patrimonial lordships. Recently the same development has been described by Andrew Lewis for early Capetian France and by David Bates for Normandy before its conquest of England.

The consequences of such family changes were far-reaching, and they were in the exact sense political, as they were intended to be. Readers should not start back in disgust with cries of "Annilime", for this is the stuff of political history. In the first place, vast regions ("stem-duchies", *regni*) could be held together by dynastic journeying from place to place. Treasure and rents could be collected from subject-peoples and used to maintain and train warriors in their garisons. Palaces and cathedrals could be built to receive the kings, and large church estates created to perpetuate land in the ruling families' possession.

True, these could be plundered, even by the king, to fund the improvement and drive of Saxon armies. But in these ways a new, royal, noble, aggressive and landed society was created.

As the reality sinks home, the historian may begin to understand better the reforming papacy of the eleventh century, the "overwhelming sense of mission, and frightening severity" of the little revolutionary who became Pope Gregory VII, and to see why he insisted that the church, lands and all, was not simply the private possession of Teutonic aristocrats. Leyer discusses this too, in a paper on "The polemics of papal revolution". He suggests that Gregory VII never thought out a rounded theory of secular government and drew distinctions between good and evil rulers rather than dwell abstractly upon the nature of authority.

Three slighter essays move us on into the twelfth century, but they give a good opportunity to watch the comingling of old and new at that period of even swifter transformation. Men seemed then to be living in two worlds at once. The first was the older, hieratic one of relics and touchings, which focused the worship of noblemen and peasant alike. Leyer observes that the collection and cultus of relics played a part both in converting the Saxons from their tenacious heathenism and in attracting the Ottonian kings to Rome, where so great a wealth of relics was to be had. Another side of this more primitive

Christianity was its physical violence. In 1107 the margrave Otakar of Styria wanted to form a Benedictine monastery out of a clerical institution he possessed. Some of the clerks were his serfs, and he forced them to become monks. "You are mine and so you must agree with me and obey my will in everything." Consent was gained by beating. Students of later medieval violence might add that this current of violence did not disappear. Provincial councils took note that lords in their castles might compel their chaplains with the whip, even in matters of the confessional.)

On the other hand, the twelfth century, with its growing literacy and openness to southern literatures, saw a new individualism which included a taste for the anecdote, scurrilous as well as moral. The devil was no longer allowed the best jokes, and even kings were sometimes viewed with a cynical eye. Nor was this confined to relatively secure France, where Louis VII was reported as saying "here we have only bread, wine and joy". The German, too, in the person of Barbarossa, was shown securing the enjoyment of territory (the Mathildine lands in Tuscany) by great duplicity. The tale counts from Ronuldu of Salerno, and it is a very different thing from the transcendental reverence of Carolingians like Einhard.

Mr Leyer looks forward to "the continuous and balanced history" of this period which is so badly needed. We can only echo his plea and hope he will answer it himself.

seventeenth century had no trouble in reconstructing the entire organism from its surviving legal remains. When it might be argued that three hundred years have not yet been long enough to clear away all the misconceptions generated by those lawyers in interpreting the fossilized remains of feudal institutions? Again, it might be objected that the symbolism is sometimes overstrained. The vision of souls undergoing purgatorial punishment, described by Walchelin, the parish priest of Saint-Aubin de Bonneville, is said by Steck to have taken place in the unsettled wilderness of Maine, which often doubles for the Mediterranean retreats of the desert fathers? Yet in fact the priest was returning from visiting a sick parishioner in his own Norman village near Orbec.

Nevertheless, symbols are usually employed successfully to make the social structure and mental outlook of the age more intelligible. This is a carefully researched, constructive and challenging book, whose value far outweighs any minor cavils or criticisms. It may provoke disagreement no less than agreement; it will certainly provoke thought.

Textual communities

Marjorie Chibnall

DEAN STOCK

The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation to the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries
266pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press, £38.50.
0 691 05585 5

In an inaugural lecture delivered half a century ago, Eileen Power referred to the need, to which anthropologists, sociologists, economists and historians were all alive, for an integration of their labours, based upon a comprehension of each other's objects, capacities and methods. While historians have certainly worked more closely with economists in the past fifty years, many of them are still a very long way from integrating their studies with those of the other two disciplines. The inclusiveness has not been one-sided: many theorists in the social sciences have been equally determined to go their own ways. So a detailed, scholarly study of the implications of literacy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which makes use of various interdisciplinary techniques and offers a positive assertion of the importance of historical research in interpretative science, will be valuable to readers with a wide range of interests, as well as being important in itself.

Literacy and oral tradition, learned and popular culture, lay and clerical piety, are all subjects that have commanded increasing attention in recent years. They have, indeed, a contemporary interest. Brian Stock is not directly concerned either with recovering the roots of modern literacy, or with tracing the sources of oral and written culture in the period under review. His interest is in studying how the elements in these cultures interacted on one another, and in reconstructing another society, a system of communication on its own terms. But he does attempt to explain why literacy is likely to be intelligible to a wide spectrum of twentieth-century readers, thus justifying a detailed knowledge of the classical tradition in the Middle Ages, and in the philosophical chapters he picks up the themes that modern, linguistic philosophers have found particularly pressing: the debate between Saussure and Lévi-Strauss or Anselm and

The result is illuminating and not at all anachronistic. Medieval thinkers, who had inherited certain philosophical assumptions, the works of the Fathers and only the elementary tools for explaining them in the logical and grammatical treatises of antiquity, had a difficult task in attempting to build up tentative systems of philosophy and theology. Even though, as Stock stresses, finding out about the world was to some of them tantamount to reconstructing Plato's inner meaning, the problems were approached in many individual ways. One important aspect of learned thought in this period is the variety of solutions offered. The interactions of these new and often conflicting ideas on society have an interest that would be lost by a linear interpretation of a traditional kind, chiefly concerned with tracing the dominant trends of thought.

In examining the range, depth and permanence of literacy, Stock uses the techniques of both historians and social scientists. His interpretation of historical sources gives a central place to "texts", conceived in a particular way. They do not exactly correspond to

any type of document; to be valid they require logically coherent reasoning. A text can, in origin, be structured to be discursive, spoken aloud. In some literate groups it may be so familiar and accepted that a written text is superfluous; but disagreement or misunderstanding makes writing indispensable. In this interpretation the Rule of St Benedict can be regarded as a text; likewise the whole Bible or a part of it; likewise a treatise such as Anselm's *Monologism*, which began in his mind as a "mental text" and ultimately gave rise to a written one. The contrast between Lanfranc and Berengar is essentially that of philosophy "to the explication of a given text in accord with traditional teaching"; Berengar saw a role for new interpretations as independent texts.

If this concept is applied to symbol and ritual, a distinction can be made between primitive, oral ritualism and the rational, interpretative approach of some eleventh and twelfth-century writers to the same rites and symbols. Again, if texts are examined in their social context, the various groups, including heretical groups, that were

held together by their use of particular texts "both to structure the internal behaviour of the groups' members and to provide solidarity against the outside world" can be categorized as "textual communities". Investigating the history of some of these communities illustrates the ways in which, even when literacy was confined to a very small proportion of the population, literate and illiterate semi-literate persons and groups could influence and be influenced by each other so as to generate social change.

Stock discusses a wide range of interrelated topics: heresy, reform, liturgical philosophy, mystical theology, the social uses of ideas, interpretations of history. In so ambitious a scheme it is only to be expected that individual readers may find some statements with which they will wish to take issue. How truly, for instance, can it be asserted that "by the mid-twelfth century monasticism centred upon written law took the place of the legitimization of royal authority through feudalism that a complex set of human relations was so completely 'reduced' to a body of normative legislation... that the feudal lawyers of the

Evidence of conquest

H. R. Loyn

TREVOR ROWLEY

The Norman Heritage 1066-1200
210pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£9.95.
0 7100 9413 2

Trevor Rowley's book is the first in a series which aims to treat the broad theme of man's interaction with his environment in Britain, a tall order but a task well worth undertaking. The author's training as a geographer and archaeologist serves him well and a good scatter of visual material, some of it familiar other not so familiar, holds the attention while maps, plans and aerial photographs enliven the text.

The substance of the book comes in six compact chapters on castles, the landscape, towns, the church, forests, parks and woodland, and the Welsh and the border. A rather thin historical survey of the heritage serve to hold the

more substantial essays in place. Mr. Rowley keeps to his brief but is conscious also of the questions likely to be asked by traditional historians.

There is much of interest here, presented from an unusual angle, for those concerned with the two central problems of early Norman social history: that is, how to assess the strength of the Anglo-Saxon heritage and how to draw the balance between attributing too much or too little to the Normans. It is only too easy to praise or blame the Normans specifically for change that was in fact common to the whole fabric of Western European civilization in the dynamic and dramatic age of the Investiture Contest. The most arresting sentence in Rowley's book occurs on page 7, where he argues that the story answer must be, no, to the question: "would the Anglo-Saxons recognise the Norman Conquest?" The negative answer is a bit too strident for my liking (as indeed for Rowley himself) but the possibility is worth pondering. The Norman period is very

well documented, and we need to reflect on the nature of the relationship of tangible remains to the literary record if we are to do more than pay lip-service to the work of the archaeologist. Evidence from church building (small churches as well as great), from castles — motes and their baileys, as well as monasteries like the Tower or Colchester — and perhaps above all from modifications that are peculiarly Anglo-Norman in Romanoesque sculpture and illuminated manuscripts, might well lead the clever archaeologist to posit a French conquest and maybe specifically a Norman one, even without literary support.

Rowley is alert to the elements of colonization in the Norman settlement and pays proper attention to urbanization as part of Norman strategy to control newly conquered territory. He has good things to say on the shape and development of castle boroughs and on the relationship of defence to trade. The chapter on forests and parklands gives full prominence to an aspect of Norman government that we neglect

at our peril. The extent of forest, far exceeding of course the extent of woodland, and the concern of later generations when the Charter of the Forest becomes intimately connected with Magna Carta, are intelligible only when we appreciate the weight of dominical lordship involved in afforestation and its legal consequences. Energy, industry, concentration of wealth and willingness to use it emerge as the great Norman attributes and they shine through the literary. One welcomes the quotation here from St Bernard of Clairvaux (who incidentally the founder of the Cistercian Order) who, reflecting on the magnificence of the great Romanesque churches, pleaded "for God's sake, if men are not ashamed of these follies why at least do they not shrink from the expense?" Some attention is paid to Wales but little to Scotland or Ireland. The full British dimension would be another volume at least. The date, memorable date, 1066 itself, will need some attention on the title-page in a reprint.

Paperbacks in brief

rigorous banding policy which Britain has considered, not quite ladies' reading.)

rather surprising conclusion that "in

8 □ Third edition. First published by Allen Lane in 1970, and reviewed by

through the complex of the Amer-

Chinese, 30pp. Century, £3.95.
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visited the area in 1879, travelling in relative comfort, but still experiencing

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THOMAS O'NEAL 267

ESSENTIALS OF THE

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and a unique literature. It is a pity that the population of a Romanian village is ascribed to community at the end of the twentieth century from south of the Carpathians, of the Poles could be ignored. sounded in that ringing peal of ideals for Britain's constitutional, religious and independence. The periodic note and other refreshingly trenchant. As the excellent critical bibliography and awards' particularly, usually justified "Bookman" "Review of the Month" "Southsayers of Moderernity." "The Hungarian Out of the House"

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RUTH ROSEN
The last sighting: Prostitution in
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Of the many themes and problems pertaining to the history of American women that have attracted scholarly attention in recent years, none is more relevant than the role of women in the processes of urbanization and industrialization. The rapid transformation of the post-Civil War years had profound consequences for both the status of, and the value system of, the American woman. The family, in the present context, may not just be the aggregate of individuals who are related to one another, but the social unit which provides the economic base for the reproduction of the system. As the value system changed, the consequences for the status of women became determined. For the first time, women became determined to change the consequences, during the violence, repression, and terror of Reconstruction. The role of women in the process of urbanization and industrialization was a central theme in the history of the period, and the passage of time has not diminished its importance. As in Britain and Europe, its growth was linked directly to the economic and social changes wrought by the reconstruction of urbanization and industrialization. The rapid transformation of the post-Civil War years had profound consequences for both the status of, and the value system of, the American woman. The family, in the present context, may not just be the aggregate of individuals who are related to one another, but the social unit which provides the economic base for the reproduction of the system. As the value system changed, the consequences for the status of women became determined. For the first time, women became determined to change the consequences, during the violence, repression, and terror of Reconstruction. The role of women in the process of urbanization and industrialization was a central theme in the history of the period, and the passage of time has not diminished its importance.

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Caring for the bodies

The history of public health in Victorian Britain could hardly be described, in the words of the preambly, as "virgin field, ready for opportunity," so it is not surprising that there are some minor errors but a few are more serious. With a large subject it is not surprising that there are some minor errors but a few are more serious. With a large subject it is not surprising that there are some minor errors but a few are more serious.

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believe that good health could be achieved by specific hygienic measures, but later there were doubts. In spite of advances in other age groups, infant mortality did not fall. The substantial decline in mortality, the substantial decline in mortality, would also have to explain why large numbers of people left Goldsmith's located within a time and a place, which will be another day.

[illegible]

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Labour autobiographies are not what

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to order themselves in strict

accept that the whole evolutionary

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which higher levels of organization

arose by chance, and survived because

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Of course the analytical procedures

mechanism do not in the least

that the evolutionary process is

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